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FOR

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS, EDINBURGH.

LONDON . . . HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

CAMBRIDGE . . . MACMILLAN AND CO.

DUBLIN . . . W. ROBERTSON.

GLASGOW . . . JAMES MACLEHOSE.

HERMINIUS

A ROMANCE



EDINBURGH
EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS
1862

250 . 9 . 96.





P R E F A C E.

N publishing this little Romance—
which was written many years ago
—there are two requests that the
Author wishes to make to the courteous
Reader.

Firstly, he would ask him to view with
mildness any chronological, archæological, or
geographical errors that his critical eye may
discover, as the Author does not profess any
special knowledge in such respects, and has
only sought to avoid glaring inconsistencies.

Secondly, he would intreat him not to
identify the sentiments of any person of the
story with those of the Author. He particu-
larly deprecates such identification as regards
the supposed writer, Herminius,—a mistake

to which the autobiographical form of the narrative might tend to lead,—his aim, when he imagined this character, not being to inculcate his own opinions, but simply to portray one of those not uncommon minds that haunt the border-land between sanity and insanity, capable of lofty impulses and noble actions, but equally capable of sudden descents into depths of evil ; fitted, in short, for anything except steadfastness, sources of bitter disappointment to themselves and to others, objects specially marked out by Providence to test the strength of human charity, and prove the vastness of the Divine forbearance in this world and the next.

I. E. S.

FEBRUARY 24, 1862.





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Herminius: a Romance.



CHAPTER I.

HAM a Roman, but an outcast; a Christian, but a miserable man. Miserable; yea, thrice miserable! What though in cold and heat, in hunger and thirst, in toil and suffering, I wander through the uttermost parts of the earth and preach the gospel of peace—who shall preach peace to me? What though I cause the light of life to shine on others—my own soul is dark, dark as these blind eyes that once enlightened its bodily dwelling-place! For the sins of my forefathers am I punished; for my own deeds also; for a sinner among sinners have I been. Hearken, oh Reader, to the story of my life, and thank the Almighty Father that thou art not such as I am.

In Rome I was born of an ancient and noble race. Distinguished in war and in council, stately in presence, eloquent in speech, was my father, as were his ancestors before him: yet with all this, good fame was wanting—never had they nor he been held in honour. A black, impenetrable shadow brooded over them; men feared and shunned them, scarcely knowing why. Not all men shunned them, for they had some friends, but these were likewise shaded by the ill-omened cloud.

The secret rumour was, that these associates shared in unhallowed mysteries, and practised deeds of fearful wickedness; it was reported that they scorned the gods whom all the people worship, and made themselves the slaves of evil dæmons. But no one now dared to inquire too closely: dark doom awaited him who pried into this secret.

Who could behold my father and not feel that he looked upon no common man—no peaceable father of a family, worshipping the gods, loving the people, and by them in return beloved? On his high forehead intellect was throned, and from his deep eye it gleamed; but fell were the glances of that eye! On his thin lip for ever sat a cruel scorn—a scorn the

more terrible to see that less against the outer world was it arrayed, than against the inner—against his own soul.

My mother loved him in fear, but fervently. She was a Greek—kings were among her ancestors. Delicately beautiful was she in form and features, but pale and ever sorrowful. Oh, mother beloved, God has provided a resting-place for thee !

My childhood glided quickly by—why should I record its memories ? It was no more than any other childhood. Little knew I then what blessedness is the mere absence of agony !

When some fifteen years of my life had passed, my father began to look upon me with greater interest than he had hitherto vouchsafed, frequently conversing with me, and always on the subject of the worship of the deities. My mother had taught me to adore the gods with a simple loving heart; but different were the feelings with which my father regarded them. “ You all,” said he, “ worship you know not what—mere blocks of stone, called by the names of men and women, who were at best mere creatures like ourselves, living their little time, then

dying to make a feast for the worms. Not such," he said, "is the faith of wise men."

At first I was alarmed at sentiments so strange, but to this succeeded feelings of pride at finding myself thought worthy of my father's confidence. I thirsted for more of the dark stream of knowledge ; but patiently I waited, not daring to question my father ; and meanwhile I strove to win his regard by avoiding boyish friendships, and putting on an air of gravity and discretion.

My father observed and approved this conduct, but was in no haste to notice it ; for some time, indeed, he refrained from even speaking to me. I began to give up all hope ; but at length he sent for me, and abruptly asked if I had reflected on what he had said about the worship of the gods. Eagerly I answered, " Since I heard your words I have thought of nothing else." " That is well," said he ; and then he began to scoff in his former manner at the deities of Rome.

" Whom then shall I worship ?" I exclaimed. For a moment my father looked at me with an earnest scrutinising gaze, and then replied, " There is a goddess ; there is a god ; there is a nobler One

than he. Would you know this mystery, Herminius? Can you renounce all your former teaching; —call that evil which you have called good, and that good which you have called evil? Dare you, for the sake of knowledge, become even as I am—hating gods and men, despising their laws, fearing nought, daring all, doing all?"

I shuddered at these words of fearful wickedness. "No, my father, no," I cried; "the impious faith you preach is not for me! Rather will I pine in ignorance all my life, and die like a beast in fear without knowledge, than be such as you are." "Good," he answered; "you think so now, but I know your heart better: you come not of our blood in vain. The faith your forefathers have held in secret for a thousand years shall not perish from their family for want of courage in my son! 'No,'" he continued, "you are worthy of a brighter destiny than to grovel before Jupiter with the common herd. I urge you not; ere long you will seek from me the wisdom that you now reject. Meanwhile, begone! But stay," he added, in a low and awful voice; "remember! secrecy or death—a death of nameless woe!" He turned from me, and I departed.

Whilst I trembled at my father's threatening words, I but the more intensely longed to learn the secret of this strange philosophy which reached so far beyond the ties of nature ; yet scarcely dared I indulge in these impious meditations without expecting Heaven's fire to blast me for the thought.

I passed nights and days of agony ; at last, in despair, I uttered furious words—“ Away with you, ye gods of Rome,—Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, and all your abhorred crew, ye foul deluders of the mind ! Welcome, dread spirits, who hate the darkness of ignorance ! Come, knowledge ! Deep wisdom, come !”

Working myself thus into a frenzy, I rushed to the inner apartment, where my father dwelt, and bursting into his presence, I cried, “ Behold thy son ! take him and mould him as thou wilt.”

My father was alone. He rose and embraced me, saying, “ You are worthy of your descent. To-night you shall be initiated into the mysteries of the Prince of the Air and of the great goddess.”

I dare not describe the horrid rites in which I now took part ; let it suffice to say, that in due

course of time I was admitted to the brotherhood of the Left-hand Mysteries and of the worshippers of the Queen of Heaven. No open adoration, no gorgeous ceremonials, were required from these secret worshippers. In public they might mingle with the hosts who bowed down before the gods of the vulgar herd ; but in private they were bound to pay homage to their own deity, and to seek for favour by deeds of wickedness.

It must not be supposed that I at once became an evil dæmon like my father and his associates. No ; not only was I restrained by some lingering respect for my mother's instructions, but the common feelings of humanity yet left to me revolted at the deeds I witnessed. Often I wished to draw back ; but, alas ! there was a great gulf between me and the outer world, and I soon became so elated by the possession of superior knowledge and power, that I would not have retraced my steps had return been possible.

Great was the knowledge of the Brotherhood, and terrible the might. Aided by dæmons, we penetrated the deepest secrets of nature ; we even predicted the future ; the wisdom of past ages was

to us an open book ; and, chief among all our gifts, resistless human power was in our hands. Let the greatest or wisest of the land rouse our wrath, his greatness became weakness, his wisdom folly, low he bowed before our might, or closed his eyes in the sleep of death.

Death—a simple word, how manifold its import!—the peaceful ending of an honoured life—the calm obliteration of obscurity—the welcome rest for grief and weariness—the crowning battle-glory of the warrior! But these were not the deaths our victims died. Poisons tore their hearts, loathsome diseases fell upon them ; their dearest friends fled from their presence ; none dared to help them in their hour of need.

Such was our power. By that power we ruled empires, and swayed the destinies of the world ; in the exercise of it the highest intellect could rejoice, the lowest soul could find a mean delight.

My mind being burdened with this dread wisdom, I found it impossible to take pleasure in the amusements of youth. To acquire knowledge became my sole object ; to this pursuit I devoted nights and days, scarcely giving myself time for food or sleep.

My body suffered ; but for that I cared not, my mind could still work. And, indeed, this labour did not fail to gain its reward ; for, before many years had passed, I attained a high degree in the order, higher by far than my noble birth alone would have entitled me to claim.

Success did not render me idle. Ambition awoke, and forced me to yet greater exertions than those which pure love of knowledge had formerly prompted. I now passed whole weeks in total seclusion—yet not in solitude; for during the watches of the night many visions would appear—sometimes the spirits of the dead ; sometimes the disembodied souls of the living ; but most often wandering daemons, whom I forced to disclose the mysteries of the universe.

My day at length came. I entered the assembly of the Brotherhood. I boldly claimed my place among the elders ; and by such proofs did I conceive them of my knowledge and power, that I was at once declared a Ruler of the Highest Degree.

I had now attained the loftiest position that a member of the Brotherhood could aspire to reach.

Now, I might enjoy my repose and dwell at ease :— but in such a condition my restless mind could never choose to remain. Unquiet and discontented, I sought to relieve my weariness by studying various matters which had formerly seemed beneath my attention, especially such as related to the practice of religion among the nations of the world.

In the course of these investigations, while conversing with several Jewish teachers, I heard for the first time of a sect called Christians, who had added many doctrines to the Hebrew faith. My curiosity being raised, I procured, not without difficulty, a few Christian writings, of which the most important were said to be by one Paulus. I studied them diligently, and discovered in them such noble sentiments, such wisdom and such goodness, that I began to hate my own evil life, feeling my utter unworthiness when viewed in the light of such perfection. I was not, however, led to accept the faith ; indeed, at that time I did not fully comprehend it in its more abstruse and spiritual aspect.

My conscience now never ceased to trouble me ; go where I would, still the tormentor followed. I began to think that I lived too much alone. I longed

for a friend, one to whom I might pour out my inmost thoughts.

Such a friend might only be looked for in the Brotherhood; and there I could find no man worthy of perfect confidence. One indeed succeeded by his humble and affectionate assiduity in winning some share of my regard; but Arturus—for this was the name of the young Gaul—was suddenly summoned to his own country, and for a time I heard of him no more.

At length I found a friend. His name was Julian. His father was a noble, of a powerful and ancient family. Well do I remember his mother, beautiful and good. Alas! she died young.

Julian was tall and very strong. His high forehead was shaded by locks of fair curling hair; his nose was straight, and of the form that we see among the Greeks; his chin, projecting boldly, formed the strong foundation to a sweet and noble face. He was candid and generous, honourable, sincere, and brave; his soul was rich in every tender and virtuous feeling, yet he was free from any touch of weakness or stain of folly.

Julian and I were soon united in the closest bonds

of friendship. Though, like myself, he had not attained the Left-hand Mysteries without partaking in many a sinful deed, he did not descend with me to the very depths of wickedness. His conscience never ceased to cry to him ; he loathed the Brotherhood with its unholy lore, and withdrew himself from it as far as he dared.

It was not long before he unbosomed himself to me, and much he rejoiced to find that I shared all his feelings. Had it been otherwise, indeed, I yet must have yielded, for the looks and words of Julian would have roused a duller conscience and touched a harder heart than mine.

We resolved to leave Rome, and go to some far country where we might live virtuously and in peace.

What country is beyond the scrutiny of the priests of the goddess ? was the question that we anxiously revolved in our minds. Fully convinced that no retreat was so secure that the priests could not discover it by their magic, we believed that were we to depart as avowed enemies of the faith, or even as disloyal fugitives, we should be pursued and put to death.

“ But,” said I, “ though it is certain that no man can deceive the goddess, whose oracle will reveal

the truth to those who seek for a response, yet, Julian, that oracle will not speak unless earnest inquiry is made. We must deceive the priests ; we must feign extraordinary zeal in the performance of all the rites, until, having set suspicion at rest, we may safely seek permission to join the legions in the isles of Britain.

Once there, we shall soon find an opportunity to steal from the army, and betake ourselves to the forests, where we will remain, leading a hunter's life for the rest of our days. It will be reported that we are slain, and the priests will not weary themselves in inquiring about us."

" Your plan is good," replied Julian ; " let us follow it."





CHAPTER II.

WE set out from Rome high in favour with the priests; and being appointed Tribunes* in the Fourth Legion, we marched with it for Britain by the way of Gaul.

In that country we remained all the winter and met with many adventures, but I will not record them, as they little concern the story of my life.

Resuming our march in the spring, we crossed over into Britain, and proceeded without delay to Glevum, in the west. There we found orders awaiting us, to leave more than half of our force, and to march northwards immediately with the remainder, in order to join the legions under Aulus Didius, who was then subjugating some warlike tribes on the borders of our latest conquests.

After several days' march the appearance of the country greatly changed. Instead of flourishing set-

* *Tribuni Laticlavi*—as the sons of senators.

tlements, cultivated fields, and plains covered with sheep, nothing was now to be seen but dense forest, and the straight line of our road piercing through the midst. The trees were of enormous size, and chiefly consisted of aged oaks, which grew low and broad, and spread so far that their foliage formed one vast canopy, and caused a darkness that filled the mind with awe. The grass came up feebly under this shade, but green and luxuriant herbage abounded wherever an opening permitted sufficient light to reach the earth.

In many places the country was flat and swampy. A centurion named Lollius having left the road but a few paces, was engulfed before our eyes in a morass; nor could our utmost efforts recover his body, so rapidly it sank in the clinging mud. The borders of these swamps were inhabited by fierce wild boars and by certain cattle of prodigious size. Serpents and crocodiles also were said to haunt some of the black morasses, but those I never saw.

Sometimes we came to hills of no great height, steep, and covered thickly with trees and under-growth, and between these eminences were deep ravines, whose banks overhung rivers on which few

rays of the sun could ever fall. During the day a horrid stillness reigned throughout the forest, broken towards eventide by the snorting of the wild boars, the howling of wolves, and sometimes by low roaring and groaning, fearful to listen to.

The road along which we journeyed had been lately made. The stumps of the great trees recently cut down were white and fresh, and their trunks, still green, were lying half consumed by fire, or were formed into bridges over the numerous rivers that crossed our way. The main army was evidently not far distant. Notwithstanding this, however, and though we had as yet observed no signs of the Britons, our commander did not for a moment relax his vigilance, for he knew that it is ever the practice of the Barbarians to make the attack when it is least expected.

On the next day it was believed that we were approaching the camp; and being unwilling to pass another night in these dangerous woods with so small a force, our commander ordered us to press forward with redoubled speed, even continuing the march after sunset, for it was his intention to proceed by light of the moon, which was then at full.

We had just reached the summit of a hill. Before us the road ran down a steep declivity, at the foot of which flowed a deep narrow river ; and across this had been thrown the usual bridge of trees. On either side of the road stretched the forest, dark, and very thick with underwood.

Our men were fatigued by their long and rapid march ; but, being Romans, they only pressed on with the more alacrity. There was something, however, so horrid in the aspect of the black gulf into which we were going to descend, that a sort of hesitating awe visibly came over the minds of the foremost. It was but for a moment ; and our leading men were soon close to the bridge, marching stoutly forward.

A strange stillness pervaded the air. Julian was near me ; his face looked grave. “ Herminius,” he said, “ there is something ominous about this place. Why do we not hear the boar and the wild bull rushing through the woods, as usual at this hour ? ” “ The cause is evident,” I jestingly replied. “ We are near the camp ; and the beasts who despise the Barbarians have learned to dread the Romans ! ”

Scarcely had I spoken, when, faintly sighing

through the air as it passed, an arrow buried itself with a plunge in the throat of a soldier near us, and mortally wounded, he fell to the ground. At the same moment a cry burst from our vanguard, “The bridge is broken!” In the growing darkness I could descry hundreds of Britons rushing towards the river; and then I heard the dull sound of our swords cutting and piercing the flesh of the Barbarians, amidst the rattle of clubs, and axes, and brazen spears, clashing against armour; and then there was terrible struggling and splashing in the water—the last efforts of drowning warriors.

It was not long that we in the centre were left mere spectators of the battle. Showers of arrows began to come from every side. Lying on the ground, posted low in the branches, or high on the tops of the oaks, the enemy plied us with missiles. It was vain to attempt to guard ourselves with shields; for, while protecting the head, arrows struck us from below; if we tried to cover our bodies, our faces were wounded from above; had our armour not been of proof, while the Barbarian weapons were of brittle stuff, not a man of us could have escaped.

There was a dead pause. All noise was hushed

near the bridge. The enemy, perhaps daunted by their severe loss at the river side, had retired from the conflict. The storm of arrows ceased.

The moon now rose, and shone out with fullest splendour, and on the opposite side of the stream, not farther than about two hundred paces, we saw the Barbarian host occupying an open space which stretched far into the forest on either side of the road. Near the front stood a man of immense height—a priest, and evidently one of authority. There was a Balearian at my side, a slinger of great renown—wonderful were the feats I had seen him do. “Sextus,” I said, addressing him, “bring down that chief, if you can.” Sextus immediately placed a pellet in his sling, and stood watching for a favourable moment.

The priest at length stepped forth from the shelter of the surrounding warriors; then looking full at our army, he raised his hands, and began to curse us by his gods;—at that instant Sextus slung. We heard the crash of the leaden missile, and the Briton fell to the ground, struck in the very centre of his forehead.

Dreadful was the yell that burst from the Bar-

barian ranks, and our slingers increased their confusion by a galling discharge, which they continued to keep up without intermission. The enemy seemed about to retire; but clouds came over the moon, and all was veiled in darkness.

Suddenly there arose a terrible cry—"Help! help! they are dragging us away:" there was a struggle,—then perfect quiet.

Again began another struggle, and again another; and so it lasted the whole night. Many of our men were carried off; and we knew that dreadful tortures were in store for those taken alive.

Each moment expecting an attack, I kept careful watch, listening to every sound; but some of the Barbarians approached so silently, that I heard nothing until I was in their hands. Several men seized me at once; I was nearly dragged out of the ranks; but Julian threw his arm round me and held me back, by his single strength outmatching all my assailants. This gave time for others to come to the rescue, and a savage fight began. Strange was it to hear the ripping of flesh, and to feel the blood spirling over face and hands, and yet to see nothing,—for it was very dark.

At length we prevailed, and the enemy took to flight. Anxious to know how it fared with our friends, we began to call to one another. "Where is Julian?" I cried. Instead of his voice answering, as I expected, there was utter silence. Alas! he was gone. Either lying slain, or carried off to meet a sadder fate—to be offered up to the cruel gods of the Britons. Burning for vengeance, I muttered to myself, "Abhorred savages! I shall live to be your bane! Cursed may I be if ever I shew mercy to one of your race!"

Morning began to dawn. Objects gradually grew distinct. Dead and wounded Britons strewed the ground, wallowing in blood, and looking hideous in the cold grey light. The Barbarians lay in heaps, but the Romans who fell had been dragged away—if dead, for the sake of their armour; if alive, to be sacrificed.

The faces of our men were pale with watching and toil; their bodies were covered with blood; nothing was to be seen but battered helmets, cloven shields, and broken spears. Still the old Roman courage kept them up; and as the sun rose gloriously on our right, a smile passed from man

to man, and nothing was thought of but revenge.

At the first signs of day, orders were given to repair the bridge, and in less than an hour it was passable. Then the trumpets sounded, and our vanguard marched forward, while the slingers stood ready to ply the enemy with missiles if he should shew himself.

Half of our men crossed without interruption, and began to climb the steep ascent which rose before them. I was myself just stepping on the bridge; when yells sounded from above, and a host of Barbarians, who had been concealed behind the crest of the hill, came rushing down upon us. Leaping and howling they came like wolves—but not on sheep, as they soon found; for scores of them were slain as soon as they got within reach of our spears. Nothing daunted, they fought on; and though not driven back, we were unable to advance.

In this position the battle remained for a time; but numbers began to tell to our disadvantage, and at length a fresh body of Britons fell upon us with such fury that our whole column was driven back by sheer brute force. In vain we plied the sword;

the Barbarians pushed all before them—dead bodies forced against the living, who had slain them.

Nearer and nearer to the bridge came the shock. Standing inactive on the other side, I shuddered to see the catastrophe. For one moment the bridge was crowded with Romans; the next, the very river was dammed up with their struggling bodies. All seemed lost; but suddenly amidst the din rose the sound of trumpets, and a gallant body of our countrymen appeared on the top of the hill, charged the Britons furiously, and obliged them to slacken their attack in front. With loud shouts, our men, weary but not dispirited, welcomed the timely aid, and pressing forward again, forced the enemy to give back. The remainder of us were now enabled to cross and join our comrades, and, comparatively fresh, we drove everything before us.

The Barbarians, attacked on all sides, disdained to yield, and of those who had left the shelter of the wood scarcely a man escaped—the ground was heaped with their dead bodies. Many a Roman also lay slain, and many lay writhing in agony—among these last was my lot, till all feeling left me, and I became like one of the first.



CHAPTER III.

WHEN I recovered consciousness, I found myself lying on a couch in a Roman tent, and bending over me I saw a centurion named Milo. “All is well,” he said, seeing that my mind was still in some confusion; “you are safe in the camp.” I tried to speak; but making a sign of silence he turned away; and overcome with languor, I fell into a deep sleep. How long it lasted I do not know; but when I awoke there was no one in the tent.

My mind was now in an unusually active state; and as I lay, suffering much pain, the whole course of my life seemed to pass in order before me. I thought of the innocent time of my youth; of my father’s instructions, and the years of evil to which they led; of my remorse and horror, and of my desire to escape from the slavery of guilt; and then I dwelt on the remembrance of Julian, that beloved

friend, who had so ardently joined with me in plans of repentance. As I thought of him, doubtless slain, and of myself lying wounded, perhaps dying, and soon to appear before the avenging gods, my heart was melted with woe, and I wept, and groaned aloud—"Miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from these agonies? My life is death—will death be life? What lies beyond the grave? Alas! if what the Christians teach be true, I know my doom—the blackness of darkness for ever. For ever!—for ever! Oh thou supreme inexorable God! how shall I avert the terrors of thy wrath?"

Looking up, I beheld a man standing near me, in simple and travel-worn attire. His eyes were earnestly fixed on me, and as he gazed all sorrow departed, and a holy calm stole over my spirit. Still he gazed with looks of unutterable compassion, and said,—“Herminius, thy sorrow is known—thy fears are known. I come to bring thee comfort, and to guide thy steps into the way of truth.” “Who art thou?” I said, trembling. “Fear not,” he answered; “I am a man like thyself. I am Paulus, the servant of the Lord.”

He then revealed to me many wonderful and

glorious things, and all that had perplexed me in the Christian books seemed to become clear ; yet in vain do I try to remember the very words he spoke, for a sort of mist enshrouded my senses.

I ceased not to gaze on him with adoring reverence. I hung on every accent that fell from his lips ; but an overpowering lethargy gradually crept over me, and everything became confused. Fainter and fainter shewed his form ; more softly came his words ; and when I awoke from my trance, and looked around, he was gone.

He was gone ; but oh, what a change had been wrought in my mind ! No longer felt I a miserable waverer, tossed from fear to fear, from doubt to doubt : I recognised the truth and beauty of the religion of Christ, and fervently I thanked the Almighty God for shewing me such favour. Yet was my heart not changed—oh, the hardness of the heart of man ! My understanding received Christianity as a faith ; but of love and humility there was nothing in me.





CHAPTER IV.

DAYS passed by, and Julian did not return. Those to whom I spoke of him considered that no hope could exist, as the Britons, always cruel, were now irritated by their recent losses in battle, and were certain to spare none of their prisoners. Even if Julian had escaped from their hands, how could he, wounded and alone, subsist in the forest, and find his way through its trackless mazes? Sorrowfully, I could not but assent to this reasoning; and I gave up all expectation of even hearing of my friend again.

One afternoon I wandered some distance into the forest, and while resting on the grass after this unwonted effort—for my strength was not fully restored—I fell asleep, and did not wake till it was nearly dusk. Preparing to return to the camp, I was surprised to see two figures advancing towards

me ; and fearing they might be Barbarian spies, I hid myself in the deep shadow of a tree.

Both the men were tall ; one was clad in skins, but the other was in Roman armour—a circumstance which increased my suspicions, for the Barbarians in this part of the country seldom had any communication with us.

They came closer to me. The man in the skin dress was the nearest. He was clearly a Briton. There was no mistaking that elastic step ; that wild wandering eye ; that tossing of the head and expansion of the nostril, as if at once suspecting and defying all things. In his right hand he held a spear, with which he gesticulated, and pointed to the camp.

I had now no doubt that he was a spy, and my impulse was to dart upon him, stab him, and then grapple with his comrade, whom I doubly cursed for bearing the arms of some slaughtered Roman ; but first I resolved to see clearly the face of this second man, to guard against the possibility of error.

They came close to the tree and stopped, and began to speak in a low tone. The words I could not understand ; but the voice of the man in armour

strangely stirred my spirit. He turned towards me, and I beheld—Julian. “ Julian !” I whispered, bereft of motion with surprise and joy. He started : his companion, quicker, saw me at once, and raised his spear to strike ; but Julian thrust him aside, and threw himself on my neck.

For a while our hearts were too full for speech. At last Julian said, “ It is a good omen from the gods that you are the first to welcome me.” “ I had lost all hope of seeing you again,” I replied, “ and bitterly I mourned your loss. Tell me, dear friend, where you have been, and what has happened to you since we parted ?” “ This young Briton,” he replied, “ has guided me through the forest from a distant place ; but let us go on to the camp, and by the way I will tell you everything.”

“ You remember,” continued Julian, “ when you were struggling with the Barbarians, and I drew you back ? As I made my last effort, I stumbled and fell. Before I could get up, a blow on the head half-stunned me, a cut on the right arm made me drop my sword, at the same instant I received a wound in the throat, and then several strong men

threw themselves upon me, dragged me into the forest, and left me bound hand and foot.

“Presently they brought up another prisoner, and, probably by mistake, owing to the darkness, placed him at the foot of the very tree under which I lay.

“‘Friend,’ I whispered, as soon as they went away, ‘tell me who you are?’ ‘Sextus the Borean, tied up in his own sling!’ said he, with a laugh; for he was a brave man. ‘Are you badly wounded?’ I asked. ‘No,’ he replied; ‘I was stunned by a club stroke, and the Barbarians thought me nearly dead, so I am fastened but slightly with this leathern sling. Could you cut through it with your teeth?’ He rolled towards me, and I freed his arms, after which he set me at liberty.

“As it was impossible to pass the Barbarians in front, we determined to go further into the wood and hide ourselves, trusting to find our way back to the army by daylight. So we crept softly away through the bushes till we came to the river, and there remained till morning.

“When it grew light, Sextus left me still concealed, and ran across an open glade, meaning to climb an oak rather taller than the rest, whence

he expected to have a clear view all around. At this moment a party of Britons came rushing towards us. There was no escape for Sextus ; in an instant he was pinned to the tree with a javelin, and then they fell upon him and beat him with their clubs.

“They did not see me, but I was too near to feel safe, so I scrambled through the underwood to the river, slipped quietly into the water, and concealed my head under a projecting rock.

“The Barbarians, having finished their accursed work, ran swiftly onwards ; and when all was still, I left my hiding-place, and went to see if anything could be done for Sextus. Poor Sextus ! he was quite dead—his skull was dashed in pieces—so I left him.

“Hearing sounds of battle up the river, there was nothing for it but to wander down-stream in the hope of finding some friendly native. It was a poor hope, but the only one.

“I walked on for many hours without interruption. At last I came to a small stream which flowed into the river, and had cut out so deep a channel in the rock, that I could not pass to the other side. Turning, therefore, and keeping near

the stream, I ascended the hill down which it ran."

"But, Julian," I interrupted, "were you not wounded and fasting? How were you able to support such fatigue?" "I had some provisions with me," he answered; "and when a man is struggling for life he forgets wounds.

"The forest," continued Julian, "grew wilder and wilder; the stillness was unbroken; everything seemed to denote an uninhabited desert. I continued to climb the hill till I nearly reached the top; then I descended into the channel of the stream—a deep ravine, whose precipitous sides shut out every ray of the sun. The effort of going down this rugged declivity completely exhausted me, and I sank to the ground, resigning myself to inevitable death.

"Hardly had I closed my eyes, when softly stealing down the ravine came the sweetest sounds man ever heard. I almost thought it was some Spirit of the place mourning over my fate; yet the notes were not those of grief, though plaintive. Eagerly I listened, and oh, Herminius! it was a song of Italy—a song I knew well of old—the maidens of Etruria love to sing it.

“The sound gave me new strength. I struggled onwards. As I went, the darkness became less, and on turning the corner of a high rock, I found myself once more in daylight.

“Before me I saw a small black lake, surrounded by crags covered with wood. Close to the water stood a cottage of skins and logs, and seated by the door was the maiden whose sweet singing I had heard.

“She rose, evidently surprised at the sight of a stranger; but as she shewed no alarm, I went up to her unhesitatingly, and besought her to give me the help I so much needed. In our own language she replied, ‘There is danger, but never will I turn from one in distress.’ Then she led me into the cottage, and gave me some milk and food.

“I began to express my gratitude, and ventured to ask how she—a Briton—knew our songs and language. ‘I dare not answer you,’ she said, with some agitation; ‘and now think me not unkind if I intreat you to leave me. Your life is in danger if you stay.’ I implored her not to send me away, wounded and exhausted as I was. What friendly refuge could I hope to find in the forest? At the

worst I should only lose my life by remaining ; and what death could be so terrible as the lingering agonies of cold and hunger ?

“ I did not plead in vain. Her heart melted at my distress, and all in tears, she said, ‘ Much grief will come from this, but I cannot send you away to die.’ She then shewed me a small inner room, in which were several skins of wild beasts. ‘ Rest here,’ she said ; ‘ but if you value my life or your own, do not leave this place till I come again.’ Overpowered with weariness, I threw off helmet and breastplate, and lying down, I soon fell into a deep sleep.

“ I was awakered by some one entering the larger room. The partition screen was of rough wattle, and, looking through it, I could plainly see the new comer—a man well up in years, tall and strong, dressed in skins, and carrying a heavy oaken staff. Suspecting nothing, he walked up and down, speaking to the maiden ; but at last, before she could prevent him, he suddenly opened the door of my room, and came in.

“ I sprang to my feet, ready to fight, but feeling very weak. The man started back in surprise ;

then with threatening voice he said some words in the Barbarian tongue. I thought he was going to attack me; but after eyeing me sternly and steadily for a moment, his brow relaxed.

“‘You are a Roman,’ at length he said, speaking in our own language; ‘never again did I think to behold one of the race. Whence come you? What is your purpose here? Nay,’ he added in a milder voice, ‘seat yourself again. You are wounded. I will not harm a hair of your head.’ Judging from his steady eye that he might be trusted, I seated myself as he desired.

“‘Who are you?—what is your name?’ he again asked. ‘My name is Julian,’ I replied. ‘I am a Roman, and a tribune in the Fourth Legion. Wounded and taken in fight by your people, I have escaped, and seek refuge here, where the Fates have guided me.’ ‘Your people are mine,’ he said, proudly lifting up his head. ‘Know, noble Julian, that I also am a Roman.’

“I gazed at him in astonishment; but the maiden, all pale and trembling, threw herself on his breast, clinging to him, and vainly trying to speak. Gently he passed his arm round her, and whispered

tender, encouraging words—‘Sweet child—my own dearest little daughter—do not be afraid; all shall be explained.’ Thus, half-caressing, half-gently urging, he led her from the room.

“He soon returned, and again seated himself at my side. ‘Yes,’ he said, resuming the conversation, ‘I also am a Roman—a Roman, and of no humble birth. I am that Irenæus who was taken by the Gauls; it is now more than thirty years ago. Saved from death—how, it matters not—I passed over into this country, became a soldier in the Barbarian armies, and did good service. I rose to favour, and married the daughter of a great priest. She, alas, is dead; but a child is left me—the maiden you have seen.

“‘Peacefully I lived many years in this solitude, remote from all warfare. But now your legions have come, and the Britons urge me to lead their armies as of old. The gods blight me with their curse, if I fight against my own people! .

“‘But I am in danger. I am watched. I have enemies who seek my life. They say that I mean to betray them to the Romans. I have disimulated, and made many delays; but my enemies

are impatient, and unless I soon prove my fidelity on the field of battle, I shall certainly be put to death.'

" 'Why not escape to the Roman camp ?' I said. ' I dare not,' he replied. ' I have abjured my religion ; and what is worse, I have fought against Roman allies.' ' I will answer for your pardon,' I said. ' When my wounds are healed, I will go back to the camp and smooth all things for your return.' ' Thanks to you, Julian ! ' said the old man, much rejoiced. ' But there is one thing yet. Tanaquil, my daughter—till this day she did not know that she was not a Briton. She loves her mother's country and people ; nay, there is a sort of betrothal between her and her cousin Morgan, nephew of the Druid Caradoc. This Caradoc forced the contract upon her, but perhaps her heart has followed her pledge.'

" 'Perhaps it has not,' I answered ; ' and be that as it may, you must return to your people, and in doing so, you will save your daughter from great evil.' My arguments at last prevailed, and he now only waits to hear from me when he is to come."

" Tanaquil," I inquired—" is she beautiful ?

You have said nothing about that." "She is beautiful," he replied, with evident reserve. I told him jestingly that he loved the fair Tanaquil; blaming his unwillingness to confide the secret. He hesitated a moment, then said—"Why should I not confess it? Herminius, I love her; but alas, I fear in vain. Morgan, this youth beside us, is betrothed to her, and I think she returns his love. Yet," he added musingly, "there were moments when I imagined I might hope."

"Did Morgan shew no signs of jealousy?" I asked. "How comes he to be with you now?" "Tanaquil herself desired him to act as my guide. He disliked the task, but has faithfully performed it, as you see."

Turning to the young Briton, Julian spoke a few words in the native language. Morgan shook his head, then waving his hand with a gesture of farewell, he parted from us, and went his way.





CHAPTER V.

FTER Morgan left us, Julian began to ask me what I had seen and done whilst he was away. This was a question I scarcely knew how to answer. I anxiously wished that my friend also should become a Christian, but I feared to tell him about my vision—if, indeed, it were a vision, and not rather a reality. I dreaded lest Julian should consider me led astray by fantasies—guided by a dim recollection of something heard formerly, and now remembered in that inner mind from whose silent promptings spring so many of our actions, although its secret working is hidden from us.

To me, the religion of Christ was full of beauty ; but I feared that it might seem incomprehensible to persons of ordinary understanding, among whom I unconsciously classed my friend. Thus I shrank from opening my heart to Julian, lest he should mock at the riches hoarded there, like a man

smiling when some little child displays its store of treasures.

But besides these shadowy feelings, there was one stronger and less unworthy. Julian was all to me—friend, brother, father. I knew not, and asked not, if his affection equalled mine—between us there dwelt the most complete confidence—we thought, felt, and acted together.

And now this new religion, was it to divide such a friendship? Yet if I concealed it from Julian, was not our friendship already half divided?

Great were the rejoicings in the camp at Julian's return. He was beloved for his generosity, his kindness, his bravery; whilst his noble countenance, and his almost gigantic strength and stature, won all men to admiration. We had mourned him as dead, and now he had come back to us. Nothing was spoken of but Julian.

My tent was thronged with friends, who vied in expressions of goodwill towards their much-loved comrade. As for myself, I confess that a feeling of envy came into my mind—"Would they," thought I, "have thus mourned and rejoiced for me?" And when even Milo, the centurion

who had carried me from the field of battle, passed by me without a word, as he hastened to welcome my friend, I felt a bitter pang. “No,” I said to myself, “I am not Julian, nor like him; but in my hands I hold the knowledge of Heaven: God has deemed me more worthy than this Julian.” The miserable thought was soon repressed; it was my first ungenerous feeling towards my friend—alas! it was not the last.

It happened that Julian and I were alone one summer day, resting under some aged trees which grew in the very heart of the forest. In front of us there was a glade sloping to a shallow, rushy brook; and the wild deer were passing us in herds, as we lay concealed by the luxuriant undergrowth of an elm.

“What think you of a hunter’s life?” I asked, —whispering low, not to disturb the deer. “Herminius,” my friend thoughtfully replied, “I prefer a soldier’s life. I care not to slay such creatures as this,”—and he pointed to a young hind who stood in the brook and gazed intently in our direction,—her nostrils expanded, her long ears quivering to catch the slightest sound.

“ My feelings are the same,” I answered ; “ but have you heard that a treaty of peace is made with the Britons, and that our legion is to be sent back to Rome ? ” “ To Rome ! ” cried Julian, “ hateful tidings ! Who told you this ? ” “ One who would not deceive me.” “ What is to be done, Herminius ? I will not return to share in the abhorred Mysteries.” “ Then there is no way but to remain in the forest, as we formerly planned, and live like virtuous men, worshipping with pure rites.” “ Worshipping—alas ! whom ? Oh, Herminius, all nature bids man worship, reason forbids him to adore the common idols, hateful are the Mysteries. What is left ? Virtue ? Man cannot worship virtue except when manifested in some tangible form. This terrible uncertainty crushes me.”

I could no longer resist the voice of conscience. “ Julian,” I said, “ there is a Being worthy of all worship. He is that manifestation of heavenly virtue for which you seek.”

Then I told him of all that had been revealed to me.

“ As I spoke, I watched my friend’s countenance. He was astonished, entranced, touched to

the heart—still he said not a word. At length, like one in a dream, he murmured, “This is most wonderful. I must meditate. Shall I also see visions from the gods?”

No more he spoke, and we returned in silence homeward, filled with deep thought.





CHAPTER VI.

JULIAN did not forget his promise to intercede for Irenæus. Taking the earliest opportunity, he laid the matter before the commander of the army ; and he, glad of so good a chance to obtain a trustworthy interpreter, not only granted a pardon to the old Roman, but desired Julian himself to bear the message, and bring him and his daughter to the camp. My friend chose me for his companion ; and a few days after the conversation just narrated, we found ourselves once more in the forest, on our way to the cottage where Irenæus lived.

Our minds were troubled, both of us feeling that the moment drew near for a further discussion of the subject on which so much depended.

Julian was first to speak—" Neither vision nor dream have I had, yet I feel assured that all you told me is true. You did not convince my

reason—even now it is unconvinced—but deep within me there works a mysterious power, which draws my heart to your pure and lovely religion."

I was astonished—overjoyed. Again I and my friend were one. Sharers formerly in the same evil, we were now partakers in the same good. Great was the store of affection laid up by us in so long and close a friendship; and with this new tie to bind us together, what could ever divide our hearts?

Full of happiness, we speeded on our journey, beguiling the time with pleasant conversation.

On the following day, we came to the ravine which leads to Irenæus' cottage, and were climbing along its steep sides, when suddenly an enormous dog burst from the thicket, and rushed towards us with ferocious growls. Julian loudly called, "Bran, be still!" and on this the dog seemed to remember a friend, and came gently up to us, but, nevertheless, would not suffer himself to be touched.

He was a noble wolf-hound. In height he reached above the waist of a tall man, his colour was grey, his hair coarse and rough, his chest deep, his head long and pointed, his limbs muscular

but light; his whole form and aspect betokened courage, swiftness, and strength.

A moment afterwards a man stepped forth. I at once knew him to be Morgan, the young Briton I had seen with Julian. At first he eyed us with a rather suspicious air, holding his javelin ready for use; but a few words from Julian removed his doubts, and he became more courteous, even turning back to guide us along the intricate path we had yet to trace.

The ravine was very narrow and dark, but after following its windings for some distance, a sudden turn brought us into open day, and we beheld immediately before us a small, yet strange and solemn lake. Tall trees grew on its banks, and spread their branches far over the water, which was so clear and pure, that my eye could dimly trace black rocks and shining gravelly beds at vast depths below the surface. Opposite to where we stood, precipitous crags, covered with ivy and crowned by ancient pines, projected into the lake, and shut out from it the rays of the setting sun, which were streaming among the pine trees, shedding such a mysterious light over their decaying forms, that they looked

like things just risen from the dead. Close to us, on a spot of open turf, stood the cottage of Irenæus. A bright sunbeam, struggling through the pines, fell full upon the door, and seemed to be an omen of good welcome; and a true omen it was, for a man of soldierly bearing, whom I at once knew to be Irenæus, stepped forth from the cottage and received us with cordial greetings.

Irenæus was a man some sixty years of age, tall and strongly formed, but bulky—almost corpulent: his eagle eye and high nose, his short curling hair and beard of grizzled black, bespoke the Roman. The expression of his face was bold, frank, and good humoured; but irascible, and firm even to obstinacy, notwithstanding—these less amiable characteristics, however, were not at once perceptible. With the utmost friendliness, he led Julian and me into his house. Morgan, meantime, wandered away in another direction.

We entered. Tanaquil rose to greet us. O Tanaquil, beloved! from that moment thine image has never left my mind. Still, still, I see thy lovely bending form—I gaze enraptured on thy tender violet eyes.

Oh, how beautiful she was ! Her soft brown hair was fastened in a simple knot ; but the golden gleam that played among its waves was an ornament more precious far than art could ever give. Her delicate features were of the most perfect symmetry—not Grecian, yet of equal loveliness—but their crowning grace was the noble forehead, which rose almost divine in its calm grandeur, and beneath it beamed those violet eyes—thus her countenance shone with an ever-varying radiance, now it was all but severe in its power, now all surpassing gentleness and love. And yet, be her mood what it might, there ever was in it a touch of fantasy, for her fine imagination, shrinking from ought of too earthly a texture, was wild and mournful as the lonely forests in which it had been nurtured.

We entered the cottage. Tanaquil rose to greet us. Julian she received as an old friend ; me she welcomed with kind words and kind looks.

The evening passed quickly. Julian was for ever at the side of Tanaquil ; while I gazed on her from a distance, each moment feeling more utterly entranced by her loveliness. Morgan sat apart in

gloomy silence, with faithful Bran couched at his feet; and Irenæus—whom the Britons called Iran, which signifies “iron” in their language—talked much and jovially, asking many questions, but receiving few answers.

It began to grow late, and Tanaquil left the room. Soon Irenæus also arose, calling out—“To rest, friends! We must be up by dawn. I know of a certain wild-boar who shall die to-morrow. Nay,” he said, in answer to my looks, “let serious matters wait. I have vowed his death, and it shall be by a Roman hand.”

I drew Irenæus aside, and reminded him that he ought not to delay his departure, as the Britons might hear of our coming, and prevent him from carrying out his design. He answered, that a day more or less could not signify, that few of the Britons knew the way to his house, and that those who did, seldom came. I urged that Morgan might betray us. Irenæus scoffed at the idea. “Morgan,” he said, “is true. Besides, he would not harm Tanaquil’s father. By Hercules! that would be a strange way to make love.”



CHAPTER VII.

THE sun was rising as we set out next day. We all carried short spears, as well as swords, except Morgan, who walked sullenly in front with Bran, and bore a brazen axe as his only weapon. Our road was along the ravine—which, indeed, was the only known way of communication between the rock-surrounded lake and the rest of the country—from thence we got to the forest, and, after walking some hours, we emerged into a great hollow, enclosed by precipices, and strewn with masses fallen from the crags. Thick patches of brushwood grew here and there, and in the centre there was a grove of aged yew trees, from among which a stream issued, and took its course through marshy ground.

Morgan, with his dog, dashed into the nearest thicket—almost immediately a wild boar rushed out furious and bleeding. I threw myself in front of

him, levelling my spear, but it only glanced off his shoulder ; at the same moment Bran seized him—he turned, and Irenæus drove a spear into his side. Wounded but unconquered, the wild boar continued his furious course, making straight for Julian, who waited for him sword in hand.

Terrible was the onset of the boar, and lightning-like the flash of his tusks ; but quicker was the keen iron blade which struck full upon the neck of the savage beast—then dropped to the earth a headless carcase, and, many a pace, rolled a head along the springy turf. “Well done—by Hercules !” shouted old Irenæus, pleased to see a Roman outvie all the Britons in their favourite sport.

Morgan now came out of the thicket. He had roused the boar, but only slightly wounded it, and scarcely could he conceal his anger at his own failure, and at the success of Julian—for whom he thought himself more than a match in courage, strength, or skill.

Leaving these rivals together, Irenæus and I went on towards the yew grove, intending to refresh ourselves at the spring ; and being thirsty, I ran

forward alone, as my companion moved rather slowly.

Hardly had I entered the grove when I heard sounds like the blowing and splashing of some large animal. Moving very cautiously, and keeping under cover of the trees, I soon beheld the cause of the disturbance—an enormous wild bull wallowing and wading in the marshy spring; while several cows, lying on drier ground, watched him from a little distance.

It was magnificent to see the mighty bull at play, rushing through the shallow water, rolling on his sides, and in sportive fury tearing up the earth with his horns, and dashing it around in showers which marred the whiteness of his shaggy mane. Black was he in hoof and horn; pale dun in hide; maned, eyed, and fronted like a lion of the desert.

There was no time to be lost in warning Irenæus. As noiselessly as possible I retraced my steps, keeping my eye on the bull, and stopping whenever he ceased to splash; and already had I reached the edge of the grove, when Irenæus unfortunately saw me, and gave a loud shout. In an instant the cows sprang up and galloped away;

but the bull dashed straight at me, making the very earth shake with his tremendous roar.

On he came, charging at full speed, with head low: I stepped aside when he was close upon me, and drove my spear into his flank. His impetus carried him forward with the spear sticking in him; I drew my sword, received a second charge which he made as soon as he could turn, and wounded him again.

Irenæus now came up breathless from haste, and boldly threw himself before the bull. Jumping aside at the proper moment, he wounded the beast, and stepped behind a tree as I had done; then I shewed myself again; and thus we stood several charges; but at last the old centurion became exhausted, and fell down, choking and utterly helpless. I ran to his aid, and placed myself before him, ready to receive the next onset.

Surprised to see his enemy thus openly waiting for him, the bull paused and glared wildly at me, with his fierce eyes half obscured by dripping blood. At that moment Bran rushed past like a thunderbolt, and threw himself on the mighty foe. He staggered and recoiled, and the dog clung

to his throat, worrying and tearing savagely. His head was dragged to the ground—I thought he was vanquished—but making a tremendous effort, he raised himself again, and swung the dog about like a feather in the air. I leapt forward and stabbed the bull just behind his heart. With a convulsive bound he shook off Bran, and threw him far away; then turned on me. I stepped aside; but too late, for one horn grazed my arm, and dashed me to the earth.

Turning in his furious course, the enraged beast rushed at me again before I could regain my footing—another bound, I was lost. But springing over me with a shout, came Morgan; down crashed his spiked axe on the forehead of the bull—in a moment man and beast were rolling above me in the terrible death-struggle.

I extricated myself uninjured, though half stunned; but Morgan remained where he fell—motionless and insensible.

We carried him to the shade of a spreading oak. “Poor youth! I fear he is dead,” said Julian. “See! half his ribs are beaten in—and there, look at that horrid gash! The horn has ripped away all

the muscles of his chest." "Alas!" I cried, "and he has met this fate in saving me."

"Come," said Irenæus, "let us not waste time in words. We must carry him home without delay. I have known men get over worse wounds."

Slowly and mournfully we carried him home. Tanaquil turned pale at the sight of the bleeding man, but with tender pity she helped us to bind up his wounds. No vital part had been touched, and recovery seemed possible; but it was evident that he could not be moved from his bed for many days.

This placed us in difficulty. It was important that we should reach the camp before the Britons found out what guests Irenæus entertained. We could not, however, abandon Morgan; it was impossible to take him with us; and we dared not send for any of his relations, as they were certain to betray our secret.

To leave him in charge of Lorn, Irenæus' slave, was equally undesirable; for though this youth was not unfaithful, his temper was fierce and rough, and it was known that he bore great enmity to Morgan, whose uncle Caradoc had torn him from his people

and sold him into slavery. Our chief object was to place Tanaquil in safety ; but she implored us not to leave Morgan : so her intreaties, added to the other considerations, decided us to remain and trust the result to fortune.





CHAPTER VIII.

AS time went on, Morgan began to shew signs of recovery, but so shaken was he in body and mind, that it seemed doubtful if he would ever regain his former strength. Tanaquil was his constant attendant while his life was in danger, and all his faculties were clouded and confused ; but when consciousness returned, he displayed strange irritation at the presence of her whose absence had formerly seemed the worst of misfortunes. Sometimes with violent reproaches, sometimes with piteous complaints, he would accuse her of not returning his love ; now he would implore and now command her to leave him, and not add to his pain by the sight of one who had betrayed his affections.

These reproaches were unjust. Tanaquil had never shewn any love for another, though, indeed, had she done so, she would have broken no freely

plighted vows, but only those forced upon her by Caradoc, whose will it would have been death to resist. In consequence, however, of this betrothal, Morgan regarded her almost as his wife, and took her affection for granted; while Tanaquil, though without hope of breaking her engagement, always felt coldly towards her lover, and treated him with the utmost reserve.

This conduct mortified him, but he had no misgivings, until the arrival of Julian, whose friendly reception caused him some pangs of jealousy. The departure of his rival removed these feelings for a time; but when this Roman not merely returned, but brought a companion to aid in his designs, and from the moment of his arrival strove without disguise to win Tanaquil's love, while she seemed more estranged than ever from him—her betrothed;—then such fury filled his soul, that he only waited a favourable chance to wreak terrible vengeance on the intruding strangers.

But fate is stronger than man's resolves. A sudden generous impulse caused Morgan to forget revenge, and save my life at peril of his own; and now, by every law and custom of the Britons, he was joined to me in ties of closest friendship—bound

to hate those I hated, to love those I loved. Thus Julian and I were now beyond reach of his wrath—free to take his betrothed from him if we could : whilst he lay helpless, ignorant of what was happening, and tormented by jealous fears. Hence his conduct to Tanaquil. He longed for her presence till she came, and then such agonizing thoughts arose, that in frenzy he would drive her from his side. So violent were these paroxysms, so injurious to himself, and so painful to her, that she at last yielded to her father's intreaties, and left Morgan entirely to the care of Lorn, the Briton slave.

Julian rejoiced, for Tanaquil was now constantly with us : I also rejoiced, for I had made up my mind to win the love of the beautiful maiden—come good, come evil.

I wished to hide this purpose from Julian. I knew that I was acting treacherously ; and he was so noble and true-hearted, that I shrank from shewing him my unworthiness. Besides, if my love were confessed, I must either leave Tanaquil, or remain with her as Julian's rival—the former course being certain ruin to me ; the latter, probable ruin to both of us. I therefore made up my mind to betray my friend,

though bitterly I dreaded his scorn, which sooner or later I knew must overtake me.

A great change had passed over Julian since he had become a Christian. The new faith which he had been so slow to accept, now ruled over all his actions:—so fervently did it burn within him, that he could scarcely refrain from pouring out his feelings on all occasions; and when alone with me, he would not converse on any other subject.

I found it difficult to prevent him from at once attempting to convert Irenæus and his daughter; but by strongly shewing the imprudence of such hasty steps, I succeeded in dissuading him from his intentions in regard to the former, though he remained obstinately bent on taking his own way with Tanaquil. To this I did not much object, believing her too generous to betray a secret to the injury of others; and Julian began his good work without delay. She listened, and said little; but nothing discouraged, he went on day by day, urging her on the same subject; and meanwhile he shewed his love more by looks than words, thinking it a duty to employ all his powers in pleading the cause of his religion.

I waited patiently, seldom speaking to Tanaquil, but rather appearing to avoid her, while to herself I made it clear that I shunned her society unwillingly, acted upon by some mysterious motive. With Irenæus I held much conversation, constantly speaking of Rome, and recalling his recollections of its games, its triumphs, its solemn ceremonies ; and to this Tanaquil listened with earnest gaze, while Julian, whispering at her side, monotonously repeated his religious arguments.

All Julian's understanding seemed weakened by his new impressions. Instead of the wisdom and boldness he formerly used to display, he now seemed more foolish than a child, more weak than a doting old man. For the sake of Tanaquil's soul he was willing to give up all hope of winning her heart ; nay, he was even ready to incur her contempt, counting his own happiness as nothing compared with the welfare of her he loved, and the duty he owed to God. Thus he persevered, vexing Tanaquil with his exhortations, while she became colder and colder, and at last sought to avoid him altogether.

Julian grew very miserable, and in his trouble

came to me for sympathy and counsel. He told me all. "What must I do?" he sorrowfully said. "Tanaquil is displeased because I speak to her of our sacred faith. And yet were she to hate me, I must continue to strive for her good! Perhaps, alas, I do not teach her aright, or how could she fail to be persuaded? Tell me, Herminius, how I ought to act."

His grief touched me; for a moment better thoughts prevailed, and I was about to give him true advice; but the good impulse passed, and I answered deceitfully—"Do not be afflicted, Julian; you see before you the path of duty—turn not aside; though it seem difficult, it will lead you right. You must persevere. If Tanaquil shuns you, follow her; and do not cease to speak to her as before. Her efforts to avoid you prove that a contest is going on in her heart; she will yield soon—perhaps when you least expect it." This treacherous advice commended itself to Julian from its very want of worldly wisdom; and away he went, resolved to persist in conduct that I knew would drive Tanaquil from him for ever.

I now began to act more boldly; and allowing

Julian to think that I was helping his cause, I found many pretexts for being alone with Tanaquil.

This change in my manner appeared to please her, especially as I said little about religious questions, except to insinuate that Julian was ignorant and overzealous, and indeed knew nothing of such matters but what he had learned from me. Her own religion, I assured her, was only another form of mine ; a blameless life such as her's being at once the end and proof of all religions.

Then waiving such discussions, I spoke to her of Italy with its glowing sun and azure skies ; I told her many a tale of the glories and wonders of Rome; I pictured to her fancy the stately temples, gleaming in their marble whiteness, perfect in form, adorned with exquisite carvings, and ever resplendent with crowds of purple-clad worshippers, who, stepping from their cars of ivory bedecked with gold, entered the noble porticos, and paced along the colonnades, or bent low in adoration before the costly shrines of the gods.

Then would I speak to Tanaquil of Britain—of her own home. I expatiated on the grandeur and loveliness which nature displayed around us, in these

venerable trees, these rocks and lakes, these lofty mountains, and deep, dark, solemn valleys, all richly robed in tender green unknown to sunnier climes.

“ Oh Tanaquil ! ” I would whisper, “ how happy were my lot to dwell for ever here ! ” With thee ! with thee ! — I thought, but said it not. Then as my spirit wandered amid such blissful dreams, as my entranced eyes unceasingly dwelt on that lovely form, every fibre of my heart would tremble, and my failing voice would sink into deep-breathed sighs, which ere long found a soft delicious echo, gentle and low, unheard by any ear but mine.

Yes, now I had won the love of sweet Tanaquil. I had sounded the depths of her soul ; I had divined its most secret and powerful feelings ; and thus had I triumphed over my rivals.

With blind selfishness they strove to bring her down to their own level, and force her into subjection ; but I raised her above myself, and raised her so high that she was fain to draw me to her for very sympathy’s sake. In Tanaquil’s soul there dwelt the feelings of her mother’s race, endued with a refinement all her own ; freedom she valued as the first of gifts, hating to be bound even in chains of reason ;

but taught and guided by poetic fancy, she worshipped all that was good and beautiful, with passionate fervour, with boundless unchanging love.

Influenced by her intellect, I felt as if another sense were given me ; my eyes seemed to be endowed with fresh powers of vision ; like a new creature, I gazed upon the beauties of nature, and wondered at my former ignorant disregard.





CHAPTER IX.

AS my love for Tanaquil increased, my friendship for Julian became less. I could not bear to see him, for the sight reminded me of my treachery; every word he spoke seemed a sentence of condemnation, and the confiding kindness of his manner was more than I could endure. I avoided him when I could, and remained silent when forced to be near him.

It was not long before he observed my conduct. He besought me to tell him the reason, intreating me to pardon him if he had in any way done me wrong. I heard him coldly, then turned away, saying that I had no quarrel with him, and that only an excited fancy could suppose that there was any change in my manner.

But Julian was too generous to be thus repelled. He took me by the arm, and adjured me by all our former friendship not to leave him without some ex-

planation. He implored me to speak freely; he would do whatever I might wish; he would give up everything for my sake. Then a thought striking him, he paused, looking fixedly at me, and asked if it could be possible that I also loved Tanaquil.

I knew not what to say, I was so taken by surprise; and he continued, with intense anxiety, to repeat his question—"Tell me, Herminius, is it so?" I remained silent. "Oh, all is clear to me now," he cried in mournful accents. "You love her, and conceal your love for my sake. Alas! who can blame a man for his feelings—he may control, but cannot prevent them. Would that it had not been fated that we should both love Tanaquil!"

"But, Herminius, hear me," interrupting me as I strove to speak—"noble, generous friend, fear not to grieve my spirit. Lay your heart before Tanaquil; let her say which of us she loves, and if I be not her choice I will yield. Why should there be strife between us, Herminius? Think of the days we have passed together—think how we have stood side by side in battle—oh! think of bygone days, and do not suffer a cloud to come over our friendship."

I was moved by Julian's earnestness ; but, prompted by some hidden feelings of pride, I could not bring myself to declare the truth, though now or never might I do so without disgrace. I denied that I loved Tanaquil ; I mocked at Julian for the thought, asking him why he had made so many words about nothing, and begging him not to quarrel with me if Tanaquil rejected him. Assuring him that there had been no difference in my manner, but that there would be if he troubled me any more with such conversations, I strode away in a passion. Julian remained still and sorrowful.

Bitter remorse took hold of me when I reflected on what I had done. Like a stricken deer, I wandered restlessly, unheeding where, and coming to the lake, I followed its shores, and climbed to the pines on the summit of the rock. Throwing myself on the ground close to the edge of the precipice, I looked on the depths below. As my eye rested on the quiet lake, so cold, so clear ; as it traced the indistinct forms of shining stones and banks of yellow sand, far down beneath the water—a blessed feeling of calm came over me, and my heart found relief in fast-flowing tears.

I rose, and leaving the sunshine which jarred with my depressed mood, I went to rest under the shadow of a group of beech-trees. It was a place known to me of old. Among the rocks a small stream had hewn for itself a way; but near the lake it separated, and formed an island of smooth turf, and there the beeches grew. Towering above their heads, behind and on either side, the precipice rose high and steep; and down it fell the rivulet in a foaming cascade, as if it would sweep away the ground on which they stood; but harmlessly it plunged into a rocky basin where its fury was restrained, and thence, in two streams, it flowed into the lake. Ivy and other creeping plants twined among the branches, and covered every crag; wild flowers grew profusely all around; while forest roses moved gently in the breeze, or dipped their heavy heads in the streamlet's tossing waves.

To this secluded place I often came, and many a peaceful hour had passed while I lay listening to the eagles screaming among the crags, or watched the wild fowl gliding silently through the yielding waters.

As I wandered down the steep path by the side of the cascade, the rushing sound of the stream, the

Oh the happiness of the hours that followed !
Why should I dwell on their remembrance. When
Time appears to smile, it is the gathering of a deeper
frown upon his wrinkled brow !

The shades of evening were falling as Tanaquil
and I pursued our homeward way. My soul was
filled with bliss unknown to it before. Not a
thought of guilt or sorrow came to chase my repose.
As I clasped sweet Tanaquil in my arms, as she
vowed to love me for ever, I felt such pure, ethereal,
rapture, that I seemed far raised above earthly
frailties into a state of perfect truth and goodness.
Julian was quite forgotten. I looked on the fair
maiden at my side, and then I pitied the world,
because there was but one Tanaquil, and she was
mine.





CHAPTER X.

S we drew near the cottage, we saw our friends standing at the door. Irenæus first observed us. Shouting and laughing in his usual manner, he began to blame his daughter for wandering with me all day, and leaving him alone. This brought blushes into Tanaquil's cheeks, and was far from pleasing to me; for the eyes of Julian, who kept a marked silence, seemed to speak real belief in these jesting accusations. Irenæus, however, continued to laugh till he was out of breath.

Weary of this unseasonable mirth, I was about to follow Tanaquil, who had gone into the cottage; but Irenæus drew me back, and resumed the conversation in a graver strain.

“ You little know,” said he, “ what risks you have been running. Caradoc is abroad again. I saw him myself in the forest.” “ What of that ? ”

I asked. “Can we not defend ourselves against Caradoc, or any other man? Besides, are we not at peace with the Britons?” Irenæus laughed—“You can defend yourself I have no doubt—but Tanaquil cannot. As for the truce,—by Hercules! Caradoc cares little for truces. Keep out of his way—that is my advice. Remember that if he even sees you or Julian, all our plans are ruined—to prophesy nothing worse.”

I had forgotten this, and seeing the force of Irenæus’ words, I asked him what he would advise us to do. “Why,” he replied, hesitatingly, “we ought to set out this very night; but unfortunately Morgan has had a fresh attack of fever, and I have given him a draught of strange and dangerous power. While its influence lasts he will be liable to paroxysms of frenzy, and unless carefully watched may do harm to himself or others. I think, therefore, we must watch with him to-night, but to-morrow evening we will set out at dusk.”

We went into the room where Morgan lay. He was in a deep sleep—the first effect of the draught. Lorn, seated at his side, looked strange in the light of a small lamp, which hung above, and

“Irenæus,” I said, “Tanaquil loves not Julian, because she loves me.”

He started up in amazement; never had such an idea entered his mind. “And have you spoken to her about love?” at length he said. His looks were not unkind. “Forgive me—forgive me,” I cried, “if I have done wrong. Tanaquil knows my heart; and if you are favourable she will not reject me.” He embraced me, and declared that he gladly gave his consent.

Now I was overjoyed. “Irenæus,” I cried, filled with exultation, “I swear to you to love your daughter truly and constantly for ever; and may the curse of Heaven fall upon my head if I do not keep this vow!” “My son,” he replied, “Tanaquil shall be your wife; and to this I pledge my word—a surer bond than priest-extorted oaths.” He laughed in scorn as he thought of his engagement with Caradoc; then seizing my hand in a strong grasp, he cried, “Be this grasp our pledge and witness!”

At the moment our hands met, Morgan raised himself on his couch, and stretched out his arms, like one calling for vengeance from afar. His face

qnil rent his heart—alas ! had he known all, he would have looked yet more sorrowful.

Tanaquil glided away from among us. I knew where she was going ; and soon we were walking together under the trees that grew beside the lake. We wandered on till we came to the top of the pine-crowned precipice, and there we rested among ivy and soft rock-grasses, enfolded in each other's loving arms.

We feared no danger nor surprise. No beasts except harmless rabbits came near the rock ; man had but small inducement to climb the steep and winding path. All was still.

Suddenly we heard a sound among the bushes. The branches opened, and Morgan came forth, leaning heavily on a spear.

He saw us—his eye gleamed with rage—with one bound he was beside us—his spear was uplifted to strike.

But a forgotten thought arose in his mind. He sprang back. “ My blood ; not his,” he cried, and drove his spear into the earth with mighty force ; then rushing forward with wild shrieks of madness, he hurled himself from the precipice. His death-

howl rang through the air as he fell—terrible was the shock when his body met the dense waters, and clove a way deep down to their sad, shadowy depths.

I started up. I grasped Morgan's spear, and turned towards the thicket. Some foreboding of danger prompted me. Well was it that I so acted, for, following close on Morgan, there came a Briton priest of most ferocious aspect. "A Roman! a Roman!" he cried, and rushed at me, drawing a long knife from his girdle. I pointed my spear, and with a bitter laugh he retreated a few paces.

At this moment Bran appeared, tracking his master's footsteps. Steadily he went on to the brink of the precipice, and there he stopped much perplexed, and looked over the height. With outstretched neck he sniffed all around; he scraped the rock with his feet; he drew back and advanced again; then, at last, awakened to the truth, he threw up his head and uttered a long melancholy howl, and crouching down, gazed on the water below with mournful, longing eyes.

"Wretch!" said the Briton, "you have murdered Morgan, and the dog reveals your crime."

“No murderer am I,” I scornfully replied. “Instantly depart, or your blood shall warm this spear.” A cry from Tanaquil stayed my hand. “Spare him,” she cried, “he is Caradoc—my uncle.” The priest, who had seemed little moved at my threats, now shewed extraordinary emotion. “Thou—Tanaquil?—thou here, with this Roman? Ah, woe is me!” he groaned, in a voice of despair; then, with frantic gesticulations, he rushed away into the thicket.

All pale and trembling Tanaquil stood. “Fear not, dearest one,” I said; “nothing shall harm you while I am near.” “Oh, Herminius,” she answered sorrowfully, “I do not fear for myself, but I dread the evil which that man may do to those I love. He is cruel and treacherous, and terrible in his anger. Let us hasten home, and warn my father—even now it may be too late.”

With all our speed we returned to the cottage. Irenæus was at the door. Tanaquil ran forward and kissed him. Drawing her to him with a tender caress, he asked the cause of her agitated looks. She told him that Caradoc had met us, and gone away in terrible anger.

A flush of passion overspread the face of Irenæus. “Caradoc here! There is no time to be lost indeed. Hasten, Herminius, to the further end of the pass, and bring word if you see anything of the Britons.” “Ho, Julian!” he cried, hearing an advancing step, “arm yourself, and go with Herminius.” Julian answered, but his voice came from within the cottage; from among the trees stepped forth Caradoc.

He walked slowly, haughtily, up to Irenæus, and said, “Your treachery is discovered. You have broken all your oaths to me and to my people. You are entertaining Roman spies. You have given your daughter to a Roman, and that man has slain my nephew. But you also do I hold answerable for his blood—” “By Hercules!” said Irenæus, “this is too much. Traitor you may call me if you please; I do not care to argue such questions; but talk not to me of murdered nephews. It were likely indeed that any Roman would stoop to slay a Briton by treachery!” Caradoc instantly rushed on him with drawn dagger. He warded off the thrust with his oaken staff, and dealt the priest a blow that brought him to his knees; but he rose before we

could secure him, and ran furiously down the ravine.

“I do not like the state of matters,” said Irenæus. “Caradoc must have brought some men with him; he would not travel alone, so far from home. Go, Julian and Herminius, and watch the pass. I will remain here for the present, and will afterwards join you with Lorn.”

I could not but wonder if any suspicion had been raised in Julian’s mind by Caradoc’s words about Tanaquil. Prudence warned me to shun the subject, especially as Julian, though grave and silent, was not more so than usual to him of late, nor was his manner marked by any particular signs of displeasure. But there are seasons when the mind, ill at ease, loses all power of restraint, and suffers itself to be hurried away by weak impulses, and thrust into some palpable snare. Such was now my state. More and more, something prompted me to say, “What thought you of Caradoc’s words?” though I clearly saw how rash and foolish would be the question.

I hoped Julian would speak; but he kept silent. I talked about some common matter, but the words

came only from my lips, while in my heart still burned the same desire to utter imprudent things. This can be resisted no longer, thought I, let me question him—but cautiously.

“ Julian,” I said, “ that priest was madly vindictive.” “ It is the way of priests to be so.” “ But there was real frenzy in his eye; did you not mark his threats?” “ Threats are thunder—sometimes the lightning follows; sometimes not.” “ But did you not mark what he said of Morgan—of Irenæus?” “ Here is the ravine; we must be silent now.” “ Julian! Julian!” I cried, goaded to desperation, “ you are trifling with me. You suspect me of wrong. You hate me. You meditate some revenge. But listen—I will speak—Morgan threw himself over the precipice in madness. Then this priest came. Tanaquil was there also—”

“ Miserable friend!” said Julian, in tones of stern reproof, “ wrong not your soul with wretched equivocations. Speak not another word—I know all.” “ How! This to me!” I cried, stung by his language, and willing to hide my shame in a show of rage. “ Quick! defend yourself!—or I will cleave you to the earth.”

Julian stepped back. “ Nay, Herminius ; I am to blame. I have done wrong in speaking with such bitterness. I am not your judge. God alone can know how you may have striven against temptation : —man is weak. I will not fight ; strike if you choose, I shall not resist. Oh ! cease this madness. The enemy is at our very door, while we are quarrelling. Precious lives depend on us.” He left me and walked on ; and, filled with shame, I followed him in silence.

As we returned to the cottage, after examining the ground beyond the pass, without finding any trace of the Britons, we met Irenæus and Tanaquil, accompanied by Lorn, who carried in his hand a strong sling of plaited hide. “ Not seen anything of them ! ” cried Irenæus, on hearing of our fruitless search, “ they are hidden somewhere, and intend to surprise us.” He began to consider. “ They must not be allowed to get to the cottage,” at length he said. “ We must take our post on that projecting rock—it commands the ravine. If Caradoc does not bring many men, we can keep him off till dusk, and then some way of escape may be found.” “ Master,” said Lorn, “ I know of a secret path over

the crags on the other side of the lake." "Why not go at once?" I asked. Lorn sharply replied, "What is the use of going if Caradoc knows our road? He would not be long in overtaking us. We must kill every man that comes, and he will soon draw off his people. He thinks we can only escape this way, so he will set a guard, and come with the rest and attack us by night. We shall be far enough by the time he knocks at our door!" "Come," said Irenæus, "let us get to our post;" and he led us to the top of the rock.

Presently Lorn caught my arm, and pointed to something moving beneath, which we soon made out to be one of Caradoc's men. Cautiously he crept from bush to bush, evidently sent forward as a spy. "Iran," whispered Lorn to his master, "let me smite him. I will crush his skull like an egg-shell." "You are always too eager for smiting," said Irenæus; but Lorn had already stolen forward to a place from which the Briton could be clearly seen while crossing an open space; then laying a stone in his sling, the youth, with compressed lip and merciless eye, crouched behind a rock, and watched for his prey.

“By Hercules!” exclaimed Irenæus, “it is Mervyn, old Fernimayle’s son. I cannot bear to see him slaughtered in this way.” “He must die,” I said; “we cannot afford to be merciful.” Irenæus slowly assented, but Tanaquil intreated her father to save the poor youth. “Do not interfere, child,” said the centurion rather sternly; but as his daughter timidly drew back, I saw how much he repented his harshness, and in this softened mood I heard him whisper, “Yes, he must have a chance for his life.”

Some thought of danger seemed to strike the Briton. Before altogether quitting his concealment, he half raised himself, and looked anxiously towards the place where we lay hidden. He was but a youth, and his fair, beautiful, countenance was shaded by long locks of golden hair.

Lorn rose up; his eyes shot forth horrid gleams; he whirled his sling; in an instant the stone would have crashed full into Mervyn’s face; but Irenæus, who had made up his mind, shouted, “Beware!” in a thundering voice. The youth sprang to one side—at that moment the stone flew, and dashed him to the ground; he rose, however, immediately.

and ran down the ravine, but his left arm swung helplessly, broken at the shoulder.

Lorn turned towards his master with a contemptuous sneer. "Truly you are ill named Iran [iron], he muttered. "Silence! insolent slave," said Irenæus; "it would be unlucky for your bones if I were a savage like you." Lorn walked sullenly away. "This fellow," continued Irenæus, "would slay a very babe in arms if it belonged to Caradoc." "That may be," I said; "but surely this is not the time to quarrel with a brave and faithful follower. Let me go and speak to him."

Not waiting for an answer, I hastened after Lorn, and found him not far off. I spoke soothingly, begging him to return, freely telling him that we could not do without him, and blaming Irenæus for his inconsiderate conduct; and, at last, moved by my expostulations, or impelled by some hidden motive, the young Barbarian consented to forget his anger.

"Yes!" he cried, "it is well for Iran to insult and threaten me, but he could little do without me now, as he will soon find. He wishes to know what Caradoc is doing?—whether he will attack us now or wait till night? Who can find this out?

come within easy bowshot, and then sent an arrow through the heart of the foremost. Lorn immediately leaped up, regardless of arrows which whistled past his head, and plying his sling with extraordinary activity, brought down two of the Barbarians, and wounded another. The rest fell back in confusion.

In vain their commander urged them to advance. Intreaties and threats were equally unavailing ; so to shame them, he came to the front, and went forward alone. Irenæus saw his chance, and just as the Briton came opposite, he shot him in the left eye, and laid him dead on the spot. This ended the fight. All the Barbarians turned and fled, and we remained masters of the ravine.





CHAPTER XII.

WE did not leave our post till nightfall, and then, as no more of our enemies had appeared, Lorn was sent to observe their movements. In a short time he returned, and advised us to begin our journey at once. His plan was to lead us by a secret path to the point where the waters from the ravine join that river of which I have formerly spoken; to cross it in a boat hidden near the place, and then to hasten to the Roman Camp, which was not very far distant by a straight road.

We followed him in the deepest silence, as he led the way past the cottage, and along the shore of the lake. It was dark; for the moon, struggling through overshadowing clouds, sent forth uncertain fitful rays; but as we reached the foot of the pine-crowned precipice, she burst the veil asunder, and poured on everything a flood of light.

Down below the crags, from the uttermost depths of the water, where the stony roots of the precipice spread in mysterious mazes, there rose a black island of rock upon which the moonlight was streaming. Tanaquil grasped me with convulsive, sudden dread, and pointed to the lake. Supported on that island rock—sad funeral bier—rested the corpse of Morgan. His broad and naked chest glistened white against the stone; his fixed protruding eyeballs stared with a stern and changeless gaze; his teeth seemed to grin with laughter; his head moved in mocking obeisances as the waves surged against his lower limbs, rocking his body with a measured rise and fall.

Bran gave a low shuddering howl; a wolf made answer from the forest; a night-bird flitted by with shrieking call; chill winds swept past, and heaped a bank of clouds over the moon.

Trembling, Tanaquil and I pressed close to one another, in the doubled life of love seeking to repel the death that seemed visibly creeping over us. Julian ejaculated a prayer; and as a feeble light again illumined our path, he marched on like one defying a host. Lorn, cased in the armour of

a hard, cold nature, chided our delay in tones untinged by a shadow of solemnity ; but Irenæus lay groaning on the earth in speechless horror and remorse. “ Up with thee, Iran !” cried Lorn, but the old man did not stir. Tanaquil forgot her own terror at the sight of her father’s agony. Tearing herself from my arms, she flew to him, and with embraces and kisses, lavished upon him the tenderest words. His anguish ceased, his limbs recovered their power, and, leaning on his daughter, he slowly proceeded on his way.

The path became very rugged and difficult, but Tanaquil kept up with undaunted courage, careless of rocks and thorns which bruised and tore her tender limbs. Brave as she was, her strength could not much longer have endured such a trial, but at last the sound of the river met our ears, and, believing that the most toilsome part of the journey was over, she felt encouraged to renewed exertion.

Lorn began to admonish us to keep the strictest silence. “ Here,” whispered he, “ is the turning-point of our fate. If we can cross this level ground unobserved, we are safe. But,” he added, “ it is possible that some of Caradoc’s men may be here ;

there is a cave close by, in which the hunters often camp." "What shall we do in that case?" I said. "In that case our best chance is to try to pass unobserved in the darkness. If we are seen, you must run for your lives to the river, swim across, and separate in the forest. I will strive to place the Lady Tanaquil in my boat. Should I fail in this, I will hide her among the rocks. Should this fail also, I will fight to the death for her."

To such a proposal none of us would accede, and time was wasted in our dispute. "Wise men!" sneered Lorn, "I respect you more than words can tell. Do as you like. For my part, I will save that gentle lady—and myself. If it please you to remain and fight while we are escaping, so much the better; it will give us more time."

Bran now uttered a peculiar growl, which warned us that men were near—for the sagacious dog knew how to indicate the nature of a coming foe, and pointed out by never-failing signs whether danger approached from bear, wolf, man, or any other creature. We crouched behind some rocks, and before we had well concealed ourselves, a band of Britons came straggling up from the point to

which our course had been directed. The Barbarians passed by without making any discovery, but, unfortunately, a dog belonging to one of them caught scent of us, and leaped into the very jaws of Bran, who instantly seized him. Lorn whispered, "To the river!" then snatched up Tanaquil, and ran with such speed that we could hardly keep pace.

As Lorn had foreseen, the noise of the fighting dogs drew the attention of the Britons, who immediately hastened to the place we had just left. Finding nothing, and hearing us as we ran over the stony ground, they pursued with all their might; they were, however, many yards behind, Lorn's promptitude having gained us a long start. Safety seemed within our reach, but directly in front there rose from the bed of the river another party of Britons, who ran to meet us on hearing the shouts of their friends. Our position was now very hopeless. Before and behind were our foes; on the left, an open plain bounded by impassable precipices; on the right, an abyss whose rocky sides resounded with the roar of a torrent which flowed between them at a vast depth beneath our feet. In one place only the sides of the chasm approached so close, that it

seemed possible to spring across ; but even there the space was wider than the length of any Roman spear, and poor foothold would the slippery rocks on either brink afford to him who might risk the desperate leap.

We stood, and prepared to fight—for vengeance, not for our lives, for of them we had no hope. “ Farewell,” Tanaquil whispered, kissing my cheek with her cold lips ;—then the foe was upon us. In an instant our furious swords heaped up an encircling wall of bodies, and the Barbarians fell back in momentary dismay.

Lorn turned to me. The moon fell on his calm, terribly resolved countenance. With sudden grasp he seized Tanaquil in his arms, and raised her aloft like a reed, then yelling the battle-cry of his tribe, he sprang over the bodies of the slain, and ran furiously towards the chasm. With a tremendous bound he leaped from the brink ; he reached the other side, and the shock threw Tanaquil far from the perilous abyss ; but his foot slipped, he rolled backwards, and hung over the precipice, grasping a bush which cracked to the strain. Tanaquil came to his aid ; with her help he gained the top, and they were saved.



CHAPTER XIII.

WE had no power to follow Lorn's example, if so inclined, for the Barbarians threw themselves upon us in such numbers, that in an instant we were overmastered and dashed to the earth ; then, strongly bound, we were dragged along, all bleeding from many wounds.

After a weary march, we came to an encampment, where they thrust us under a hut of branches, slackened our bonds, and set some food before us. “ Why eat ? ” said I to my companions, “ let us die of our own will like true Romans, instead of meekly waiting till the Barbarians choose to torture us to death.” “ It is braver, and more worthy a good man, to endure to the end,” answered Julian. “ Who knows what fortune may yet do for us ? ” said Irenæus, energetically ; “ and, by Hercules ! I should be ashamed to let them think that I dreaded any of their tortures ! ”

Armed men now came and led us to a glade in the forest, where Caradoc sat in state surrounded by his band, and ready to pronounce our doom. As we drew near, the Archpriest smiled scornfully at our miserable appearance, and began to address Irenæus with despicable taunts. “ My honoured relative,” he cried, “ I rejoice to behold you. Thanks for your zeal in ensnaring these Roman spies! But for you, they might now be safe in the camp with their brethren—in that hiding-place among the hills. Such services demand reward—reward more worthy than I can give you here. Let us hope that the wisdom of the High Court of Druids may be able to discover a fitting recompence.”

For an instant the cheek of Irenæus glowed with anger, but, calming himself, he answered firmly—“ It is well that you own your unworthiness to slay me—for death is the reward you speak of. To insult a prisoner is safe ; but further your courage will not go. You dare not forestall the sentence of the Druids—I know you of old.”

Caradoc in fury drew his dagger, but sheathed it again with a bitter sneer—“ Where did you learn

your cunning, man? Daggers kill more pleasantly, perhaps, than the subtle flames! Away with him, guards! Bear him safely to the Royal City. Away with the others also!" Giving these commands, the Priest departed, and we were led back into the forest.

After several days' march, we reached the borders of a sedgy lake, so wide and deep as to seem altogether impassable; but our leader sounded a blast on his horn, it was answered by a similar note, and presently some large boats came swiftly up to the bank. Our guards placed us in one of these; we pushed off, and made our way to the other side by labyrinths of intricate, winding passages, cut through lofty reeds, which obscured the view in every direction.

Landing immediately, we climbed a steep ascent, and thence we at length beheld the limit of our journey—the Royal City of the noblest tribe of the Britons. It stood on a plain encompassed on three sides by wild crags, while to the south it was protected by the sedgy lake, towards which the ground fell in a rapid slope. The houses were almost entirely constructed of oak. Most of them were

broad and very low, but built of such immense trees, that the mind was filled with astonishment at their massive strength. Raised on a rocky eminence in the centre of the city, and surrounded by a grove of ancient oaks, stood a building more considerable than the rest ; it was the palace and citadel of the Druids.

High wreaths of smoke, as if from a sacrifice, were at this moment rising from the grove, and the clang of musical instruments, and the shouts of men, came floating down the wind. "They are torturing some unhappy wretch," said Irenæus ; but our guards sternly commanded silence, preventing all further conversation.

Passing the city gates, we were hurried through the streets to the citadel ; then they led us along a descending passage, and down a steep flight of steps, and thrust us into separate dungeons, hewn out of the rock, gloomy and chill, and altogether dark.

While I lay in this dismal solitude, I took no note of time. At first, dull despair oppressed my spirits, but fury soon took the place of passive sorrow, and raged so vehemently that I could not control

myself from rushing wildly about the cell, and dashing myself against the wall with yells and curses.

Sometimes a strange heaviness pervaded the air, crushing my brain with leaden weight; sometimes I was conscious of a shadowy presence, which, though intangible to the outward senses, revealed itself in momentary glimpses to my inner self, leaving me racked with vain endeavours to retrace the visionary shape.

My dreams also grew very horrible. Dreadful images rose before me, and varying themes of terror mingled in giddy confusion, combined with a sickening sensation of illimitable vastness, which formed itself into a voice, and cried with unceasing monotony, "No hope! no hope!" Sometimes a torpor came over me, holding me chained in dull half-consciousness.

It was no fear of death that shook my mind. Had I borne with me to the dungeon humble devotion of heart, and resignation to the will of God, no suffering from cruel wounds, no dismal solitude could have thus overwhelmed me; but as it was, my proud spirit rebelling against Heaven,

again fell under the sway of those evil dæmons whom I once had served.

Madness might have been my lot for life, but the Almighty Father was merciful, and saved me from that dreadful doom. Saved me—I think; but oh! how can a mind give certain judgment on its own condition? I believe myself to be sane. Who can say more?





CHAPTER XIV.

IBEGAN to fear that the Britons intended to imprison me for ever in this terrible darkness, instead of sacrificing me to their gods; but at last there was a change. As I sat one day expecting the coming of the gaoler — a stern and silent man, who brought me food at regular times, and dressed my wounds — the door opened, and a guard of soldiers entered the cell; and, having clad me in a coarse black dress, they took me into a room where I saw Julian and Irenæus, attired like myself. We ran to embrace one another, but the soldiers stopped us, and all attempts to speak were silenced by blows. Presently we heard the sound of trumpets. Then our guards led us through winding subterranean passages, to a vast dark hall, whose extent the eye could not determine amidst the gloom.

Again the trumpets sounded; a wide door was

thrown open, and a band of torch-bearers entered in solemn procession, chanting a song in honour of the Sacred Oak. Dividing into two bodies when near us, they took up their position on either side of the hall.

In consequence of this arrangement, a strong light fell upon us and our guards, while the farther end of the hall was very faintly illuminated ; we could, however, discern a number of seats ranged in order, prepared for the judges who were to pronounce our doom. What their decree would be was hardly doubtful, for those who came before the court of Druids were such as had been chosen to be burnt in sacrifice to the gods—the sentence of the judges being given to invest the victim with a sanctity which nothing but this solemn consecration could impart.

Thus I knew that a death by fire would soon be my lot, but this prospect did not appal me. Despair and suffering had blunted the keenness of my feelings, and in perfect apathy I waited to endure whatever Fate might have in store.

Irenæus was in a sterner mood. His face was rigid and composed, while his dark eyes darted

forth fierce fire. As I looked at him, I said to myself, “ He only longs that it were the time to shew how proudly a Roman can die.”

Far different was the aspect of Julian. He also seemed prepared to endure, but in no spirit of pride or hatred. In every feature shone meekness and love ; and, looking at me with eyes that beamed with a hallowed radiance, his lips seemed to whisper, “ Oh ! still beloved friend, place all your trust in God.”

The trumpets sounded with deafening clangour, —again rose high the song of the Sacred Oak. Back rolled on heavy hinges the massive door, then the trumpets and the voices of the singers were hushed, and in deepest silence glided in many tall forms shrouded in robes of white. Placing themselves on their judgment-seats, they rested motionless ; and in the gloom looked like those spirits of the night, whose shapes we may dimly view, but whose faces of horror are shrouded from our shuddering gaze.

The guards withdrew, and we were left alone with our judges. Then one lofty figure arose, and in deep solemn tones spoke forth—“ Advance,

Irenæus ! and hear thy accusation." With a firm step Irenæus moved from his place, and stood before the tribunal.

Again the chief Druid spoke—" Accuser ! deliver thy accusation."

At these words rose one of the Druids, and in the hard, cruel voice of Caradoc, thus began—" I accuse Irenæus of treason to this nation ; of perjury to myself ; and of the murder of my nephew Morgan."

" Irenæus !" said the chief Druid, " thou hast heard the accusation ; hast thou anything to plead in thy defence ?"

With a bold and high voice, Irenæus thus replied —" Noble Druids ! full well do I know that it is of small avail to speak in my own defence before your high tribunal, whose function it is to doom, not to absolve ; and were it but at the bidding of Caradoc that I am called upon to answer for myself, your keenest torments would be insufficient to extort one word from my lips. But, noble Druids ! it is impossible that I should be unmindful of the benefits I have in times past received from your nation ; and I now speak, that my name may not be handed

down as that of one regardless of honour, and devoid of gratitude to those who had shewn him mercy in adversity, and kindness in more prosperous days.

“I am accused of treason, perjury, and murder. I confess myself guilty of treason; inasmuch as I have not hesitated to prefer the service of Rome—my true mother—to that of Britain, who is but my fostering nurse, although she adopted me as her own son.

“I am guilty of perjury; inasmuch as I have bestowed my daughter Tanaquil on a Roman, in contempt of the oath my bitter foe Caradoc had compelled me to swear. Thus I broke an extorted vow. Thus I did wrong, and yet did right!

“I am not guilty of murder—either with this hand, or by that of another. Morgan, while in the madness of feyer, threw himself over a precipice, and thus died. I am not guilty of murder.

“I now, noble Druids! in your presence declare my gratitude to your nation for the favour it extended to me when a stranger and a captive: solemnly protest that no power but the love of my native country—a feeling that is wanting in none

but the basest minds!—could have forced me to rank myself among your enemies;—and now, further, by the memory of the good service I have done in former days, I adjure you to grant me a boon. It is—that when I ascend the pile to be offered as a sacrifice to your gods, I may not be urged forward by the hands of soldiers, nor dressed in this mean attire; but, clad in the armour of a Roman centurion, may be suffered to march freely to the stake, unfettered and uncomelled."

He ceased; and deep consultation began among the judges. At length there rose a Druid who had not spoken before. "Irenæus," he said, in gentle persuasive tones, "were I to say to thee—thy crimes against the nation shall be pardoned, and thou shalt be restored to thy former position among our people, if thou wilt solemnly cast off all obedience to Rome, and swear to remain for ever faithful to Britain—what would be thy reply?"

"Were you to offer such terms to me," answered Irenæus; "nay, were you further to declare that I should be permitted to return to my countrymen if I only bound myself not to fight against

Britain; I should reply—‘ It cannot be. Irenæus knows no middle courses. Set me free if you will; and our next meeting may be face to face on the field of battle.’ ”

The Druid answered—“ I see it were vain to contend with such obstinacy. Thou art condemned to be offered in sacrifice to the great god who ruleth in the air. The boon thou hast asked is granted.”

He ceased: then the chief Druid rose and called me by name—“ Herminius ! advance and hear thy accusation.” Caradoc was my accuser also. “ This man is guilty of crime,” said the insolent priest, “ besides being a Roman. As a spy he came to the Lonely Lake, and there wronged a maiden of noble descent ; he also basely murdered Morgan, her betrothed—my own sister’s son.”

To this effect he spoke, but I scarcely heard his words, for before my eyes there had suddenly opened a prospect of deliverance. When the younger Druid, who had answered Irenæus, began to speak, it had seemed to me that I listened to a well-known voice. As he proceeded, a gleam of light chanced to fall on his countenance, and I recognised Arturus, the Gaul who had come to

Rome to be instructed in the Mysteries, and who had so greatly desired my friendship.

Lost amidst the thoughts which crowded upon me, I took no heed of what was passing, forgetting even to repel the base calumny on Tanaquil which Caradoc's words implied, and when the chief Druid required me to answer my accuser I still kept silence. In a louder voice the Druid called on me—"Dost thou dare to insult thy judges? I command thee to speak." Sternly I replied—"I am Herminius—Ruler of the Order of Perfection. By the ineffable name of Him who dwelleth in the third circle of the heavens, I adjure thee to beware!"

Great astonishment fell upon all. With troubled countenances they looked one to the other. Some started from their seats and stood motionless in amazement; others retreated, as if dreading my presence.

The voice of Caradoc arose amidst the confusion. "What! Druids!" he cried, "do you shrink in fear from this miserable one? Has he by some base means stolen words of power? What then? Any listening slave may do the same. You still dread him? Then thus will I shew you

the way to deal with impostors!" He drew his ever-ready dagger, but his fellow-priests seized hold of him and wrested the weapon from his hand.

"Oh brethren! Oh noble Druids!" cried Arturus in tones of anguish, "take heed what you do. This is no impostor. You see Herminius—that great Ruler of the highest Degree. To him our utmost knowledge is but folly. Lay but a hand on him and tremble for the consequences. I tell you we may have bitter cause to rue the injury already done to this man of power." Speaking thus, Arturus tore from me the black dress, unclasped his own robe, and drew it around my body.

Caradoc and some of the Druids witnessed this scene with displeasure, and rushed forward to prevent Arturus from doing me such honour, others ranged themselves as my protectors, and a violent strife would have been the result had not the aged men who presided over the assembly interposed and restored order. The Druids resumed their places. I remained still standing before my judges; no longer, however, in the garb of a prisoner, but in attire more beseeming the dignity I claimed.

For a while there was deep consultation among

the Druids. Then the Chief Ruler arose and said—“Herminius! thou hast uttered in our hearing words of high and mysterious import, and one of our number has spoken in attestation of thy lofty claim. We Druids, be it known to thee, fail not to observe the ordinances of the great Brotherhood with a strictness that never is relaxed; but it is manifest that it would not consist with prudence to admit thee, by blood a stranger and an enemy, to partake in our privileges, till by all due rites thou hast proved thy position in the Brotherhood, and solemnly proclaimed thy fidelity to us whilst thou remainest among our people. Meanwhile thou shalt dwell in the house of Arturus, who will be held answerable for thy safe keeping.”

“Be it so, noble Druid,” I replied, and seated myself by the side of Arturus.

Julian was now summoned. “He is one of us,” I said to Arturus, who had not seen him before. Arturus immediately told this to the chief Druid, who then demanded of Julian if it were true that he also belonged to the Brotherhood.

Julian looked on me for a moment with a sad and humbled gaze, then thus he spoke:—“Druids!

were I so minded, I could prove my right to receive high honours from your hands, instead of a death of fiery torments. But though, not less than that of other men, my body shrinks from bitter anguish, never will I seek to save it by staining my soul with guilt. Yes, Druids! you may torture me to the uttermost, but within me there is that which you cannot kill.

“I now declare unto you all that there is no God but one—even the God of the Christians—and in Him I place my trust. And I declare unto you that I reject and abhor the abominable faith which you uphold—as in former days I also did. May Heaven pardon me for my sin!”

Scarcely did the rage of the Druids suffer them to hear Julian to the end. Cries for immediate death to the recreant arose on every side, and with difficulty the older Druids persuaded the rest to reserve him for sacrifice at the great festival.

The Chief Ruler then solemnly doomed Julian to be burnt to death in honour of the gods. Soldiers led away the two captives; and I observed that Irenæus shrank from his former friend, now that he knew him to be a Christian.



CHAPTER XV.

ARTURUS led me to his house. As we went, I could not but meditate on the strange vicissitudes of life. A few years ago, I—Herminius, a great man in Rome—thought it condescension to notice the poor Arturus; now, he had become my protector and patron, I his dependent friend. He was, however, too generous or too weak to take such a view of our relative positions. He could not divest himself of the awe, approaching to adoration, with which he had been accustomed to regard me; he only felt that the object of his highest veneration was coming to make his abode with him, and words could not express the joy that filled his soul.

“Oh, my honoured Herminius!” he exclaimed, as we entered his house, “what ineffable happiness to see you again—to hear the godlike wisdom that falls from your lips! Enter, noblest friend, enter

my dwelling ; I would it were more worthy of your reception !”

Uttering these words of extravagant adulation, Arturus led me into a large room, where I beheld a very beautiful maiden seated near the window.

“ Rise, Guenora ! rise !” cried Arturus. “ This is the noble Herminius, who has deigned to come to dwell with us.”

Guenora haughtily rose, displaying her magnificently luxuriant form, and addressed her answer to me :—“ A welcome shalt thou have, Herminius, such welcome as Guenora has for all her guests, but nothing more.” “ Pardon her,” cried Arturus ; “ pardon her ignorance !”

Heeding him not, I replied to her :—“ Noble lady, I beseech you to believe that, in my very heart of hearts, I pay you honour. Condemn me not, I intreat, because the too great regard of my friend has sought for me a reverence far beyond my poor deserts.”

“ I do not condemn you,” answered Guenora proudly. “ And now, Roman, I tell you at once and for all, that there can be no sympathy between us. While you are here, I will not fail to shew

you that hospitality which it beseems me to exercise, but I desire not to hear soft speeches of affected humility from one of your race—one whom in his proper character as an enemy, I should hate; and whom as a friend!—” Her lip and eye but too plainly expressed the contempt she had hesitated to speak; and with secret feelings of anger and mortification I answered, “ You know me not, lady, or you would not thus misjudge me.” “ I seek not such knowledge, and boast not such judgment,” she haughtily replied, then left the room with majestic gracefulness.

Offended, but smiling, Arturus turned to me—“ Who knows better than Herminius what women are? They respect none but those they have learned to fear.”

“ You speak philosophically,” I said, striving like Arturus to hide vexation under a smiling mask; “ you speak philosophically, as men who have suffered always do. But tell me, my friend, who is that splendid beauty who has so scorned and rebuked us?” “ That,” answered he, “ is my sister Guenora.”



I lived with Arturus for many days ; meanwhile Julian and Irenæus lay in their dark prison. The Britons, in spite of all my efforts, refused to set them free, and would not even allow me to see them. In other respects, my position in the tribe was one of honour and authority. Extinguishing the last sparks of conscience, I had wholly returned to my former evil religion ; and with such proofs did I convince the Druids of my superior power and knowledge, that the highest of them were fain to sit at my feet, and learn wisdom from the lips of so mighty an instructor as Herminius the Roman.

In the degradation of my soul, I had not shrunk from abjuring my country, even as I had my religion ; and while I swore the vile oath of fidelity to the Britons, I was yet meditating how best to break it. To escape to the Roman camp was a purpose I never lost sight of ; and so skilful was my dissimulation, that the careless trust of the Barbarians would soon have afforded me the desired opportunity, had it not been for Caradoc's craft. This vindictive enemy having induced a party among the Druids to join with him in insulting and injuring me, at last contrived a scheme to keep me under perpetual

restraint. Pretending that it was necessary to protect me from danger, he succeeded in imposing a guard upon me, so that wherever I went abroad, I found myself followed by two armed men, who also stationed themselves at the door of any house into which I entered. All present hope of escape seemed debarred; so, with apparent calmness, I yielded to fate, and laboured as diligently to strengthen my position, and increase my power, as if it had been my lot to remain among the Britons for ever.

Arturus I found a never-failing friend. Of the highest birth, of great wealth, endowed with eloquence, and—except in his infatuated regard for me—with subtlety, foresight, and wisdom, he possessed the chief requisites for popular command; and in fact, he was the leader of a very powerful party, mainly consisting of the younger members of the Druidical Brotherhood.

Such was he abroad, but at home he appeared to be held in less esteem, for Guenora resisted all his exertions on my behalf, and did not attempt to conceal the hatred with which my presence inspired her. Influenced a little by her exceeding beauty,

and more by motives of policy, I had spared no efforts to soften her temper; but finding that gentleness was without avail, I at length resolved to follow her brother's advice, and meet her with her own weapons of contempt, pride, and arrogance.

The queenly Guenora at first perceived this change with disdain and unmeasured astonishment. That this Roman—this meek endurer of her constant scorn—should dare to meet her attacks; should answer her most bitter taunts with well-veiled sarcasms which baffled all reply—it was too strange to reach her comprehension. But as days went on, and she could no longer conceal from herself that she had found her match, a new timidity came over her spirit, and her courage and energy began to fail at the very time that they were most required. My power increased as her self-confidence forsook her; she first learned to fear me, and then, as Arturus had predicted, respect followed fear and took the place of hatred. At last, completely subdued, she became very gentle and melancholy, and shewed no more of her former pride, but with patient humility strove to blot out the remembrance of the past, and win the friendship she had once rejected.

Her grief and penitence so touched my heart that I could not have forbore to shew her forgiving kindness in return, had I thought it unwise, instead of having designed to do so from the first. But alas ! I found how dangerous it was to make a plaything of a woman's soul. My gentler mood had only served to hurry forward a crisis which stern unpitying coldness might have repressed.

Guenora was the slave of vehement impulse ; and feelings swayed her heart as wild and strong as ever raged beneath a southern sun. She had hated me with all the intensity of her nature, and now, rushing through intermediate states with almost terrible impetuosity, she loved her subduer with resistless unbounded passion.

Oh ! how I upbraided the Fates for thus bringing love out of hatred ! How I cursed my own folly which had entangled me in such perplexity !

To yield to love for Guenora was forbidden by a thousand voices of conscience—a thousand of reason. The first spoke of truth to Tanaquil, of gratitude to Arturus, of regard for Guenora herself. The latter, of my perilous situation among the Britons, certain to visit any wrong with fierce re-

venge; or, at the least, with a jealous watchfulness which would for ever prevent me from returning to my countrymen.

Firmly controlling therefore any weak inclinations which Guenora's beauty and tenderness excited, I resumed my former cold indifference, preferring her hatred to her love, as I was debarred from the middle course of friendship; but, far from being discouraged, she avowed her passion in fury and despair, and with tears and frantic expostulations implored and commanded me to return her affection.

Firm as adamant I remained while the billows of her frenzy beat around me. I dared not leave her at once in such a state; but as soon as she grew calmer, I tore myself from her dangerous presence, and wandered away from the city, taking counsel with my own mind.

Happening to come to the marshy ground near the lake, I struggled through tangled masses of reeds and sedge till I got to the waterside. Suddenly, I heard a low voice call my name. Looking around I could see no one, but at last the face of Lorn became visible from among the long grass in which he had hidden himself.

“Lorn!” I exclaimed, “you here?” “Did you think,” answered he, “that I would leave Iran and all of you to perish?” “But Tanaquil—is she in safety?” “Safe as a Roman legion can make her, Herminius. After I leaped the chasm I found my boat, took the lady across the river, hid her in a cave all next day, guided her by night along paths known to few, and brought her safe to the commander of your army.”

“But how came you here?” “Oh! I can find my way anywhere. Besides, I have friends; and listen—this night Iran and Julian will be set free, and I will guide them to the camp. It will be well for you to remain hidden here, and I will not fail to find you when the right time comes.”

Here then was the prospect of deliverance for which I had so long been sighing: and alas, I could not avail myself of it. “Oh! Lorn,” I sorrowfully said, “you know not how I am beset. Wherever I go soldiers follow me. I am watched so closely that were I to attempt to escape with you I should only bring destruction upon you all.” “How many guards have followed you now?” “Two. I see them approaching. Farewell.” “See!” said

Lorn, and, smiling, he drew forth a long knife, "I will kill one. You are unarmed, but you can wrestle with the other till I am ready for him."

"Lorn," I replied, "it cannot be. There is no time to explain. Leave me to my fate. I trust to you to tell Julian and Irenæus that I have abjured the Romans and become a Briton. Tell them this, or they will remain and die rather than go without me. Tell them the truth, as soon as they are in safety—that Herminius has still a Roman heart, and will yet rejoin his countrymen, or perish in the attempt."

"Farewell, then, Herminius," said Lorn, with some emotion. "I have learnt to obey. I will do as you have said. But—hear me—I will return, and never more depart till I have set you free."



CHAPTER XVI.

FILLED with melancholy thoughts, I returned to the city, and at the very gate Arturus met me. "Have you forgotten," said he, that to-night is the great festival of the Caverns? Hasten, my friend, and dress yourself in your priestly robes. Caradoc is already whispering evil things against you."

I had indeed forgotten that it was the appointed time for one of the most solemn ceremonials of the Druids—one from which the people were excluded; and Arturus, in his zeal for my credit among the Brethren, had come out to seek me and hasten my return. With rapid steps we repaired to the citadel, attired ourselves in priestly vestments, and assumed our places in due order, to the joy of my friends, and the confusion of Caradoc and his partizans.

Amidst sonorous chanting of the high song of the Sacred Oak, began the ceremony. * * * * *

* * * * The lofty walls of living rock shook to the clang of trumpets ; frantic—the priests upheld the sacred song ; and the deep mighty music boomed along the caverns, echoing and re-echoing in their endless mazes, like the heavy billows beating on the iron shores of Gallia, roaring as they rush to the crags, moaning as they return to the ocean. So sublime, so mystical, so maddening, was this song, that my senses reeled with excess of rapture, and I poured my whole voice into the chorus till every fibre of my body shook with wild overwhelming excitement.

The wondrous music ceased. Then at the command of the Arch-Druid all the inferior priests retired, and I myself, Arturus, Caradoc, and a few others alone remained. Guided by a spot of light sparkling at a distance like a star, we followed one another along a low and narrow gallery which seemed to lead into the very bowels of the earth. The air became intolerably thick and suffocating ; and oppressed by this and by the horrible darkness, my heart began to fail, and I felt ready to lie down and die.

Suddenly the most enchanting strains of music came sweeping down the cavern ; now, in a full

rush of melody; now, in half-broken tremulous vibrations—as when some sportive doves at play flash through the air with lightning wings; but swift return, and dart in gleaming circles round their home; then flutter down to rest on that loved dwelling-place. Again it was the song of the Sacred Oak; but not now thundered from the deep throats of men—and oh! if the chant had been terrific and sublime, how sweet, how exquisite it sounded now in woman's delicious voice!

Inspired by these heavenly sounds we sped along the cavern with redoubled courage, and soon we reached the hall where flamed our guiding star—the sacred fire which burned eternally around the most hallowed symbol of our faith. * * * * *

* * * * Swiftly, swiftly, round the altar glided the beautiful dancers, to the music of their own sweet voices. Queen among them all shone Guenora, dazzling the eye, entrancing the soul with her matchless loveliness—not cumbered with the wonted load of rich and stately garments, her regal form was more adorned than hidden by the filmy fabric of her snow-white dress. * * * * *

* * * * The sacred rites were completed. We began to retrace our steps in the direction of the

outer world. I chanced to come last, and stepping too hastily in the profound darkness, my foot struck a stone, and I fell with such force that pain prevented me from rising till my companions had gone on some distance. Hearing their footsteps, I followed, but in a wrong direction ; and soon there ceased to be even the faintest sound. In vain I called : there was no reply. In vain I sought for the true path : numberless branching passages led me astray, sometimes to a barrier of rock, sometimes to a dangerous pit ; but at last with joy I saw the gleam of the sacred fire, and succeeded in reaching the shrine in which it burned.

But I did not yet feel safe. I was alone in a dark and secret cavern : perhaps the Druids might not return, or might not find me till too late ; perhaps Caradoc might be the first to discover me, and what could I then expect but a cruel death. Disheartened at these thoughts, I could not refrain from a sigh of bitter despondency.

As if in answer, a gentle voice whispered my name ;—I turned, and beheld Guenora.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE Royal City was in an uproar. Cries of “Treachery!” echoed in every street, parties of armed men hastened in every direction to pursue the audacious fugitives. The wives and children of the slaughtered prison-guards frantically flew hither and thither, tearing their hair, and crying out for vengeance on the Romans. All was confusion and dismay.

Well knowing the tide in which popular fury would run, Arturus hurried me into a secret cave hewn out of the rock beneath his house, and entreated me not to shew myself till the violence of the storm had passed. “Seek not to leave the house,” he cried, imagining that I wished to go to the chief Druids, and clear myself from all suspicion; “it matters not what you may say. Julian and Irenæus have slain their guards, and escaped from our strongest prison. The people in their present

mood would kill you. You are a Roman—that is enough."

I smiled at Arturus' vehemence. He thought that I did not heed his warnings, and in desperate fear he grasped my arm, crying—"You must stay here! You shall not go!" "Why this violent terror, Arturus?" I said. "I am ready to do whatever you wish. Think you that I care if the Druids believe me guilty, till to-morrow, so long as I am safe for to-day?"

Scarcely had Arturus concealed me, when a tremendous din arose from without. Raising myself to a small opening, I could see all that was passing around. Collected near the door there was a crowd, chiefly composed of armed men; there were some priests also,—friends of Caradoc, who, not choosing to offend Arturus by appearing himself, had sent these emissaries to excite the populace by artful speeches. Loudly they all called to Arturus to bring me forth, and chided his delay with the most savage threats.

Their fury became so great that they seemed on the point of breaking into the house. Arturus having vainly tried to calm the tempest by means of soft words, now changed his plan; and suddenly

throwing wide the door, he presented himself to the people in his priestly robes, and with stern authority commanded them to depart.

They wavered, and were about to obey; but at this moment of hesitation, the widows and mothers of the slain rushed forward, and with piteous cries implored their countrymen not to shrink from executing just vengeance. These frantic women, rending their hair, and wounding themselves with knives, so stirred up the fury of the crowd, that a number of armed men, dashing Arturus aside, rushed into the house and violently forced their way through every room.

Enraged at not finding me, they vented their wrath in ferocious imprecations, and at length I heard them thundering into the chamber in which was the entrance to my place of concealment.

Then rose above the turmoil, the queenly voice of Guenora—calm, but powerful and thrilling. “Insolent men!” she said, “What mean you by this rash intrusion? Depart at my command, or dread the vengeance of your rulers, whose authority you now impiously outrage.

There was silence. The rioters, awestruck,

were about to retire ; but again the shrill voices of the mourners and the cries of the maddened crowd resounded through the air ; and some one in the house called out—" Do you fear a woman, brave men ? Force her to yield the slave. Think not that the Druids will support this murderer and traitor. Go on ! go on ! a Druid commands you."

" Stand back !" cried Guenora, proudly. " Hearken, ye people ! Herminius is my husband. Would you slay an innocent man ? Last night he never left my side—and yet you say he killed your brethren !" " Go !" she cried, " go, if you are men—pursue the Roman fugitives who have caused your loss ;—but perhaps you think it safer to insult me here, than to meet those terrible swords in the forest, where your women will not be at hand to help you !"

Arturus now spoke in more soothing accents. " Nay, Guenora," he said, " you wrong these brave men. My friends, Guenora has spoken truth ; pardon the harsh words in which she has conveyed it. You have heard what she said about Herminius. You see he cannot in any way

have aggrieved you. If you still suspect him of guilt, let him be brought before the High Court. I will answer with my life for his appearing, and if he be not innocent, my voice will be the first to doom him to death."

Thus, between Guenora's pride and Arturus' subtlety, the tumult was appeased. The crowd went away, and the city was again at peace.

In a little while the door of my cell was opened, and as I came into the room I was welcomed by Guenora and Arturus. "Guenora," I cried, "to you I owe my life. How can I thank you for such noble courage!" "Yes, Arturus," I continued, turning to him, "unworthy as I am of such a gift, your sister has bestowed her love on me; and though in strictness I cannot yet be called her husband, it rests but with you to make me so by confirming our betrothal." "Noble Herminius," he replied, "to see you the husband of my sister would be supremest happiness—as you well may know. But tell me, how comes all this to pass? I thought, to my grief, that Guenora regarded you with hatred, and that you did not love her much better. "Question me not," I answered laugh-

ingly. “Perhaps Guenora may some day unfold the mystery.”

Then amidst smiles and gladness I plighted my faith to Guenora, but my heart was cold within me.





CHAPTER XVIII.

 S the recognised husband of Guenora I found myself treated by both priests and people with greater deference than before. Without difficulty I now obtained the removal of my guard; caution, however, restrained me from attempting an immediate escape, as it seemed probable that my deliverance from open control would at first be met by increased secret watchfulness. Besides, I fully relied on Lorn's promise of returning to my aid, and while there remained any chance of his coming I was unwilling to set out alone.

Meanwhile I employed myself in gaining information about the surrounding country, thinking that such knowledge could not fail to be of future advantage. By degrees also I extended my wanderings further and further from the city, and on such occasions Guenora frequently accompanied me, help-

ing by her presence to avert suspicion and to protect me from treachery or violence.

One day we roamed farther than usual, and having climbed to the top of a crag which formed the summit of a lengthened range, we beheld from this elevation a vast expanse of wild and beautiful scenery :—mountains and rocks in a thousand forms of ruggedness, spread far as the eye could reach ; dark forests covered endless tracts of land ; and many a lake and river gleamed dazzlingly in the sunlight.

Far away to the north,* there arose from the plain a long low mountain, whose form was so fantastically uneven, so scored with deep ravines, so broken by sharp precipices, so singularly crowned by a high sword-like peak which clove through dark, brooding clouds, that one could not but gaze upon it; though with a certain awe springing from the consciousness that mystery lurked within that strange black chaos of rock.

“Guenora,” I said, “what is the name of that unearthly-seeming mountain?” She shuddered.

* Probably in that district of Wales which was afterwards overwhelmed by the sea.

“Hush!” she replied in a voice scarcely audible, “do not speak of it. In the city I will tell you more. We know not what may be near us;”—and with affrighted glances she looked around. Chiding her folly, I began to repeat my question; but she became so agitated that I ceased, and we hastened to descend the hill.

When I saw Arturus I asked him why Gue-nora had been so much afraid to speak about the black mountain. Not without hesitation, he replied that this mountain was inhabited by a race called the Graumi, who were said to be allied to dæmons and to partake of their nature. While possessed of superhuman power, they were more cruel than the savage beasts, rending and devouring all who fell into their hands.

Arturus continued, that it was thought these Graumi had power to steal invisibly upon any person who spoke of them, and carry him off if he said anything in their dispraise; hence it was reckoned only common prudence to refrain from alluding to the mountain and its inhabitants.

“But, Arturus,” I asked, “do you believe in these stories?” “Not altogether,” was his reply,

“ or I should have said less just now ; but so many strange things have happened, that I hardly know what to think. It is certain, however, that the Graumi are our most cruel enemies ; and all the vulgar give entire credence to what I have told you. Among the common soldiers there is not a man but would rather suffer death than cross the river which divides our land from the black mountain. And now,” he added, “ I must ask you to question me no more on this subject, for it is one I greatly dislike.”

It was evident that Arturus had some faith in the tales he had been relating, though anxious to prevent me from thinking so ; and this increased the awe which gradually crept over me, and restrained me from making further inquiries about those dæmons or magicians, the Graumi. I also ceased to wander in the direction of the black mountain.





CHAPTER XIX.

SPRING was now past ; summer was come, yet Lorn had not appeared. No words can tell with what anxiety I looked for his return. Not only was I consumed with longing to see Tanaquil once more, and be again among my own countrymen, but it filled me with agony to think that each day brought closer an event which I expected with unspeakable horror.

The great festival of the War God of the Britons drew near, and full well I knew that many Roman prisoners were to be sacrificed with dreadful torments, while I, as a Druid and a judge, looked on ; nay, took a part in the ceremonial. My soul sickened at the thought. I urged Arturus to devise some plan to save me from the dreadful spectacle.

He sympathised with me, but could afford no comfort. "Think," said he, "what use Caradoc would make of your absence. He would

excite such an outcry against you as a treacherous favourer of the Romans, that the people, always doubly mad at such seasons, would rise and tear you in pieces.

To this argument I could not but assent, yet in my despair, seeking to obtain impossibilities, I pleaded "Could not the prisoners be ransomed? Is there no sum that the people would accept, no condition to which they would agree, for the saving of these men's lives?" Arturus smiled. "You little know," he said, "the nature of our people, if you would seek to divert them from vengeance by offers of money. As for conditions, there is but one—one which they cannot refuse to accept, but which I imagine you are not very likely to propose." "What is it?" I eagerly cried. "To offer yourself as a victim in place of one of the prisoners. They could not reject the substitute, because you are a noble like myself, and it is a privilege of ours to rescue any victim from death by undergoing the punishment in his stead." "I am of old patrician blood—none better in Rome—but am I noble here?" "Your position as a Druid, and your marriage with my sister are sufficient to make you so. Besides,

it is enough that you are noble in your own land."

"But how can you be sure," I inquired, "that this strange privilege remains in force? Not many nobles, I should suppose, have availed themselves of their right?" "Such sacrifices have been made," replied Arturus. "I have seen an aged man claim his right to save a son or daughter; and though some hated enemy might thus be set free, no one ever dared to resist the ancient law."

"But the common people—have they the same privilege?" "No. They die without hope of reprieve;—who would care to save them?"

"And all are classed with this herd, except those who are noble in the Tribe by birth, connection, or office; or who, belonging to another race, can adduce proof of noble descent in their own country?" "Even so," answered Arturus; and our conversation ended.





CHAPTER XX.

IT was the day before the festival. Crowds of people from every quarter came pouring into the city.

As I watched the throng, my attention was drawn to a very venerable old man who approached, dragging himself painfully along on crutches, and begged me to direct him to the house of Caradoc. As he came closer to hear my answer—for deafness seemed one of his infirmities—he said in a low voice, “ Go to the place where you met Lorn before. Take a sword, and some bread with you ; ” then, in different tones, he loudly thanked me for my courtesy.

Astonished as I was, I succeeded in concealing my surprise, and turning from the old man with apparent indifference, I began to speak to a friend who happened to be near. Wasting few words on him however, I hastened home, and hid a sword

and some provisions beneath my robe ; then mingling with the crowd, I passed the gates unobserved, and made my way to the lake, where I soon discovered Lorn, seated in a little boat floating in the shallow water among the reeds.

He signed to me to step in, and paddled cautiously along the shore, till we came to a bend in the lake, then making a sudden turn into clear water, he drove the boat forward with all his might.

At length he seemed to think that we were out of present danger. Raising his paddles in the air to catch a breeze which had just sufficient power to carry us along, he stretched his gaunt prodigious chest, exclaiming with a laugh—"So you didn't know me with my white beard and crutches?"

"Were you the lame old man?" I said, rather surprised. "I thought him one of your friends. You gave me no time to question you." "That was for your own sake as much as mine. To speak truth, I knew how you were bound to that baneful woman, and thought if I gave you too much time for considering, you might choose to stay with her, and send me back alone to the Lady Tanaquil."

It was strange that he should have read my

heart so justly. At that very moment I was recalling all Guenora's tenderness and beauty, and doubting if I ought to exchange such wealth of impassioned love, for the timid, cold affection of a young girl, who perhaps had already forgotten me —who might even regard my return as an unwelcome interruption to some new love-fancy.

“ Speak not disrespectfully of Guenora,” I said, with grave reproof. Bending down his head, Lorn smiled a strange, beautiful smile, and musingly whispered to himself,—“ I have seen the Lady Tanaquil.” Then suddenly raising his eyes, gleaming like pale stars, he cried with impassioned earnestness, “ Guenora—thine to-day, another’s to-morrow! Tanaquil—thine, and only thine; thine for ever !”

At this outburst from one usually so reserved, my astonishment overpowered all other feelings; but Lorn, evidently vexed at having spoken so vehemently, now began to excuse himself in a manner that roused my utmost indignation.

“ Oh !” he cried, affecting an insolent carelessness, “ I see you do not like coarse mortals like me to use the language of our betters. What should *we* know of the delicate, delicious secrets of refined

minds? In plain words, then, Herminius, Tanaquil is a good and beautiful maiden who loves you, and whose love will last: Guenora is a mad, vain, changeable woman, who will hate you for going away rather less than she would soon have hated you for staying."

Angrily, I commanded him to hold his peace. He smiled, and said no more, but dipped his paddles in the water, and urged the little boat along.

On calm reflection, I found myself more impressed by my companion's words than I liked to admit. Without thinking so harshly of Guenora as he did, I could not but feel that in her capricious, violent mind, there was no place for an unchanging affection, and I pictured to myself the fury with which I should have witnessed the transfer of her love to some other man. Then I thought of Tanaquil—the kind, the gentle; and as memories of her came crowding upon me, my soul began to yearn for her presence with unspeakable longing. A change came over my being. Now, I felt as if there had been no past except with Tanaquil; could be no future except at her side. I turned to Lorn, and sought by friendly words to make up our quarrel;

he answered with ready frankness, and under his glad strokes the boat seemed to fly; foam leaped before us, waves eddied far behind.

We were now in a narrow channel bounded by precipitous broken rocks, which in some places stretched across the water from either side, and formed natural arches of the most wild and fantastic appearance. The water was very deep and clear, we could even see great fishes gliding about, or grimly watching for their prey, so far below the surface that the movement of our boat did not disturb them. The rays of the sun fell upon the higher points of the rocks on our right; and in the black shade on the opposite side, crawled many hideous lizards, whose home seemed to be equally land or water.*

Dashing down one of these reptiles with his paddle, Lorn cried, "That! for thy likeness to Caradoc;" then calling to me to beware, he turned sharply round a projecting rock, and into a narrow vaulted passage, up which we pursued our way till the boat grated against a bank of gravel at the end

* Perhaps the last remnant of those reptile tribes which infested Europe in primeval times.

of a cavern, lighted by an opening in the roof. I sprang to shore; Lorn followed, and carefully tied his boat to a stone. "Now," said he, "let us rest and eat. We have hard work before us."

Having satisfied our hunger, we struggled on through a maze of winding passages and fallen rocks; we climbed a precipice; we let ourselves down slippery, shelving crags to the brink of a fathomless abyss; we moved along its verge on a path scarcely wide enough to hold the foot. No obstacle daunted us, for I had resolved that wherever Lorn led I would follow, and he understanding me, took pleasure in trying my courage.

At length he stopped, and declared we must go no further along such roads without better daylight. It was already dusk, and I willingly yielded to Lorn's decision; so making a shelter among some rocks near the top of a ridge, we laid ourselves down to rest, and soon fell asleep.

When I awoke and raised myself from my stony pillow, the first streaks of morning were appearing in the heavens, and distant objects began to emerge from the darkness in which they had been concealed. First one mountain broke clearly on the

sight, then another uplifted its rocky form ; and soon the whole wild scene of desolation was displayed, except where a mass of dense black mist lay like a crouching dragon—vainly I sought to discover the secret guarded by that heavy veil.

At length the sunbeams, wrestling in their young strength against the powers of darkness, compelled the mist-cloud to quit its throne ; and as it was rising majestically towards the sky, a mighty blast of wind came surging over the hills, and with loud roars of triumph scattered the retiring vapours ; —then I beheld the mountain of the Graumi.

The sight of this mysterious object troubled me. Into my mind came all the strange tales about the mountain ; I could not refrain from looking round to make sure that no dæmon of the place was watching, ready to seize me with his cruel talons.

Lorn observed my disquietude, and smiled in his old sarcastic way. “So you are looking at the black peak ? You wish to visit the Graumi —to become a high priest there, perhaps ? To marry one of the dæmons—then leave her in spite of her claws and teeth ? Ha ! ha !” “Pray cease

this talk," I said. "No good can come of such mockery." Lorn only laughed again; then sitting down on a stone he rested his face on his hands, and gazed long and earnestly at the black mountain.

The strange youth seemed to draw intense pleasure from this view, one so full of terror to most of his countrymen. His countenance began to lose its harsh expression, his lips were parted by a rare smile of gentleness, his eyes now gleamed with excitement, now glistened with rising tears. Long he sat thus absorbed in his own thoughts. I was unwilling to disturb him; but time was passing on, and I wished to escape from the rocky height on which we stood, for chilling winds were creeping up from below, gnawing and piercing to the very bones.

"Lorn," I said at length, "it is you who are interested in the mountain—not I. I half believe you know something about it!" Lorn stared fiercely at me. "What have you to do with me?" he haughtily exclaimed;—but instantly he changed his tone. "Pardon me, noble Herminius," said he, "I spoke without consideration. I had a dear

friend once who dwelt near that peak. Let us say no more on the subject." "Too much has been said already," I replied.

After several hours of hard walking we came to the top of a deep, overhanging precipice, faced by another of similar character, which formed the opposite side of a narrow valley beneath our feet. "We must cross this place," said my companion. "Who will give us wings?" I asked, scarcely thinking him in earnest. "Not wings, but a steady head and firm foot are needed," was his reply. "Look!" and he pointed to an object which a turn in our path now revealed.

The scene was one of majestic grandeur. High in the air, from either side of the glen, projected a mass of rock, far overhanging the abyss and approaching within a few paces of the opposite crag. Placed on these, as if by some Titan's hand, there rested a huge stone which completely bridged the intervening space. The wear of ages and the violence of mountain tempests had wrought decay even on this hard, enduring block, cracking it through and through, and splitting off fragments, which lay in scattered heaps among the waters of a torrent

far beneath. So much had this constant waste reduced the bridging stone in several parts, that the marvel was that it did not altogether break and fall in pieces. Its crumbling form seemed to shake as currents of winds dashed against it, tearing small fragments from its riven surface, and driving them in showers through the air.

“Must we cross that bridge?” I asked. “We must—or perish here,” answered Lorn. “Do you think I did not know the danger of this path? But we could not have escaped the Britons had we gone any other way. At worst, it is better to be dashed in pieces than to be burnt alive.” “Surely you never led Irenæus over that tottering arch?” “No; I took him by another road which is shut to us now. But come on, Herminius. Will you go first, or shall I?”

I waited a moment till the wind lulled, and then stepped upon the bridge, concentrating my mind, fixing my eyes upon the path, not venturing to glance to the right or left. I reached the middle in safety, but as I was passing over the narrow single stone that crowned the arch, the rock loudly cracked under my weight. In sudden horror I looked

round, my eye was caught by the giddy whirl of the torrent rushing far down below; my head swam, my limbs lost their power, I was just able to throw myself flat on my face, and lie still, keeping a feeble grasp of the rock. The wind arose, and raged furiously. Every moment I expected to be blown from my hold, but fortunately the storm ceased, and I recovered sufficient strength to crawl over the rest of the bridge. * * *

Some days after this adventure, while passing through a great forest which stretched westward from the Roman camp, we came unobserved upon one of the advanced outposts of the army. The sight of the helmets and breastplates, the flash of the spears, the gleam of the swords, woke such rapture in my heart that I was on the point of rushing forward to join my beloved countrymen, but Lorn drew me back, and reminded me of my Briton dress, and the risk we ran in suddenly shewing ourselves to the soldiers.

We gave due warning, and were allowed to advance. On coming nearer, I perceived that the commander of the guard was no other than my friend Milo. He welcomed me with all his heart,

and Lorn received an equally cordial welcome from the men, to whom he had become known while he stayed in the camp with Irenæus.

After many friendly greetings had passed, Milo asked me what I intended to do. "Why not remain here for a while?" he said. "It is better than the dull camp." "I cannot stay," I replied; "I must see the commander at once. I have many things to tell him." "Perhaps," said Milo, laughing, "there are other people you wish to see! We are stupid no doubt, but not altogether blind. By Hercules! you are a man to be envied!"

I felt strangely displeased at Milo's jesting: I was angry that others should have seen Tanaquil, and admired her beauty. It vexed me to think that my desert treasure—my jewel that I would have reserved to gladden my own heart alone, had been suffered to shine before the eyes of common men. While I loved Tanaquil the more, that she had been beloved by Julian and Morgan—worthy spirits; I loved her the less, that her charms should have attracted the notice of such camp-revellers as Milo. Their approval seemed almost a blot on her purity.

I answered Milo with a coldness that surprised him, and hastily took leave without heeding his intreaties to make a longer stay.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE evening of next day brought us within sight of the camp. Resting for a moment, I strove to calm the unmeasured joy which swelled within me at the thought of meeting Tanaquil so soon. "Oh! how," thought I, "shall I restrain myself within bounds of reason? Shall I not in my transports of delight draw ridicule on myself and alarm my gentle maiden?"

While meditating, with downcast eyes, something cold and moist touched my hand. It was Bran, who, to win my attention, was pressing his shaggy head against my arm. Caressing the noble hound, I looked on every side for Tanaquil. I could not see her at first, but Lorn, keener-eyed, pointed to a group of people reclining in the shade, and among them I soon discerned her, resting close to her father, the brave old warrior Irenæus.

Julian was also there, but sitting apart from the others.

I went silently towards them, but before I was very near Tanaquil heard me coming. She turned her beautiful countenance—our eyes met. With a cry of joy she sprang up as if she would rush into my arms; but at that instant a strange hesitation came over both of us. I cannot tell what she felt, but for my own part many discouraging influences overpowered me,—self-reproach, doubts and misgivings,—chill reserve on meeting one so loved and so wronged, in presence of indifferent spectators.

We both paused: then drew near, and I coldly saluted her, ceremoniously, unlovingly. With a look of sorrowful disappointment she turned away. It was a moment of bitterness; but I could not repair my fault, far less could I respond with due cordiality to the loud greetings of Irenæus, or the welcome of Julian, who met me as kindly as if there had never been any difference between us.

Thus while my own heart was glowing with love and friendship, I wounded the hearts of those I loved best, at a moment when a happier nature

would have riveted more closely than before, the bonds of an interrupted though not dissevered friendship.

It was getting late, and we began to return to the camp. On looking for Lorn, we found he had disappeared; we called him, but there was no answer. "Oh, do not be distressed," said old Irenæus to his daughter, "our friend will take care of himself: he is more likely to eat wild beasts in the forest than be eaten by them!" "He is a strange youth," said Julian. "A savage, at times," Irenæus rejoined; "yet I like him all the same." "He saved my life," said Tanaquil. "And mine," cried Julian. "By Hercules! mine also—now I think of it," added blunt Irenæus. "And perhaps mine also," said I; "thus Lorn has conferred on each of us the greatest of benefits, yet we scarcely acknowledge him a place in our hearts, because he is—strange—unlike other people!"

"Your remarks are hardly just," answered Julian quickly. "I am not ungrateful to Lorn, but his manner is so cold and bitter that it repels all fellow-feeling." "Though he is but my slave, I count him as a friend," said Irenæus. "If he is bitter,

he has had misery enough to make him so. Frost hardens some things, while sun ripens others. The joys of his life have been no better than mitigated woe." "Poor Lorn!" sighed Tanaquil, tears glistening in her gentle eyes. I loved her for her tender-heartedness; yet would rather she had kept all her sympathies for my joys and sorrows.

From my comrades in the camp I received a boisterous welcome, just such as they had given Julian when he returned from the Lonely Lake. To hear the greetings bestowed on me, a stranger might have supposed that I was the best-beloved companion of all my fellow-soldiers. Yet how often had my heart cried to me that except Julian I had no friend! However—not being quite devoid of wisdom—I yielded to the pleasant influences of the hour, without stopping to consider whence they took their rise. Whose voice then more joyous—whose laughter more cheering than mine! And still as I warmed into merriment, still increased the riotous mirth around. Oh! how great the delight of experiencing the sympathy of one's fellows.

Excited and happy, I left these jovial friends

and went to look for Tanaquil. She was alone, in her father's tent. Her face brightened when she saw me. I took her in my arms and kissed her tenderly. The spirit of love, so long absent from my heart, again vibrated through its old dwelling-place. Once more, Tanaquil was all to me, even as I was all to her.

Henceforth every moment I could snatch from military duties was given to Tanaquil. The Britons, taught by experience it seemed, took care to maintain peace; so that except in the regular camp services, there was nothing to be done, our commander not choosing at present to employ the troops on any distant operations. Thus I was enabled to pass many an hour with Tanaquil, wandering beneath the shady trees of the forest, or resting on some grassy bank warm with the rays of the summer sun.

How strange a thing is love—the vanquisher of time! How often had I been weary while gathering rare knowledge from the lips of the learned! How often had I ceased to enjoy the conversation of friends whose wit and wisdom by turns imparted thought and drew it forth! How, alike in the city, in the country; in the camp and on the battle-

field ; amidst luxury, amidst hardships, had I groaned beneath the burden of existence ! Yet at the side of a young, simple maiden, ignorant of all the world but her own forests and mountains ; unlearned in the arts of alluring admiration, ungifted with the sprightly tongue which in some women delights men, while it alarms them—at her side I knew no weariness, no sorrow, no vexatious care ; I on earth, was blessed with such happiness as that which Heaven's immortals never cease to feel.

Oh, how well do I remember ! It was evening. Tanaquil and I were together in the forest, near the brook where the wild deer came to drink.

“ Oh, my love ! ” I whispered in the fulness of my heart, “ what are Romans or Britons to us ? Let us leave them, and I will live with you always, among these beautiful trees. I will build a cottage by some stream like this, far away in the forest, where no one shall ever find us. Then while I hunt the wild beasts, you shall tend the fruit and flowers ; and when I come home I shall see you waiting at the door, watching for me.”

Softly sighed the maiden, pleased at these

foolish words; but it suddenly seemed to me that her sigh had said—"Winter comes soon, alas!"

In the luxury of loving hearts we sought not to shake off the melancholy that was stealing over us. It added a novel charm to our usually joyous conversation. "My Tanaquil," I whispered, "I tremble to think how perfectly, how entirely happy we are. Dark days must come. What mortal ever escaped the grasp of sorrow? How many live out long lives of never varying woe! But death comes to them sooner or later—alas! how soon he may come to us. Not all thy beauty, Tanaquil, can save thee—and for me, a soldier is never far from the icy land."

Tanaquil wept as I spoke. "Pray, dearest," she said, "do not think of these sad things. God will surely watch over you, I love you so truly. Herminius! you know that within our heart there dwells a spirit far more wise and powerful than we are. And this spirit can rise to Heaven and plead with the great God. My mother taught me so, and she knew all the wisdom of the Druids."

"Little child!" I replied, smiling, "Thou art a

deep philosopher. But what then becomes of all the Roman deities who look after me?" "Nay, Herminius," Tanaquil exclaimed, "I know you do not believe in such fables. I know that you think like Julian, who used to be always trying to teach me his religion. And you do believe, as I do, that there is but one God—most good—most great." "I do," answered I, solemnly. "But Tanaquil, why did you refuse to learn from Julian?" "Oh! he is not so wise as you. He tells strange stories—hard to understand—about other gods."

I was displeased at her ignorant irreverence. "Tanaquil," I said, "Julian is wiser than either you or I. If you had listened to what he said, you could not so utterly have misunderstood his meaning." "Do not be angry with me, dearest;" Tanaquil said, looking up with mournful eyes, "teach me yourself, and I will try to learn."

Strange feelings came upon me. I felt a constraining power, as of old, and with an eloquence that surely sprang from no mortal source, I spoke to her of the sacred Christian faith. But why, oh just Heaven! was it thus decreed?—vain were my attempts to lead the maiden from her erring belief.

To all my words, she only answered—"Herminius, I cannot feel it so."

Vexed at her pertinacity, I cried, "I see you have determined that we shall not be in perfect accord. That matters little now, but a time will come when we shall wish it had been otherwise." "You speak of death, dearest," the poor fond maiden said, and threw her arms around me. "Oh ! may I be the first to die ! And then my spirit will go to my God, because I have loved him ; and when your life ends your spirit will go to your God, because you are good and true—and how can we fail to meet again ? There cannot be two Gods, and two dwelling-places for the spirits of the good!"

Kindly I caressed my Tanaquil, stroking the waves of her delicate golden hair—so different from the dark masses that decked proud Guenora's head ! —and soothing her heart with many loving words. And so we walked home together ; she, all happiness again ; I, full of sadness, for I could not but doubt whether Tanaquil's spirit would ever meet mine in Heaven.



CHAPTER XXII.

 **S**TANAQUIL and I approached the borders of the forest, we heard the sound of footsteps; and presently a man rushed by, covered with dust and blood, crying out as he passed, “To the camp! To the camp! The Barbarians are at hand!”

The messenger was entering the camp as we reached the gates. Wearied by long and rapid travel, and faint from loss of blood, the man had just strength to stagger to the commander’s tent and cry, “The Barbarians come!”—then he fell down, and breathed his last.

With lightning haste the legions flew to arms, joy sparkling in every soldier’s face at the thought of once more giving battle to the foe. Cheerful jests echoed on every side, as the men buckled on their armour, grasped their good swords, brandished their spears, and spoke of victory. Soon the whole

army was arrayed, and in perfect readiness awaited the orders of the commander.

Julian and I were in our places at the head of our men, Irenæus stood at my side.

The commander came forth mounted on his noble black horse, and rode to the front of the army. He was about to address us, but at that moment another messenger arrived, and presently we saw a band of wounded and wayworn soldiers, advancing along the chief street of the camp. "The remains of Milo's guard," whispered Irenæus. "See, there he is himself." The commander also observed Milo, sent for him, and began to hear his report of what had happened.

I was near enough to perceive that my friend had brought unwelcome tidings; for as he proceeded, the commander's face, usually so inscrutable, grew dark and furious. The soldiers were not slow in noticing these signs also, and whispers began to pass that some desperate work must be before us.

These suspicions were confirmed, when the commander, turning from Milo, ordered forth all the cavalry, some two hundred horsemen, and immediately despatched them at full gallop down the

road leading to the Roman settlements. He then sent some auxiliary Britons to act as spies, and proceeded to post his troops in such a way as to provide for the present defence of the camp, while the army remained in instant readiness to march out.

Night advanced, but the Barbarians did not appear; probably knowing the strength of our position, and dreading to risk a failure at the commencement of their enterprise. Our sentinels kept strict watch, while their comrades all in armour; their weapons in their hands, were suffered to rest at their posts as best they could.

There was little sleep in the camp that night. The men full of cheerfulness, conversed with one another, and many a joke and jest went round; while the older soldiers wondered at the daring of the Barbarians in coming out again to meet a Roman army, told of the battles we had won over such foes in times past, and anticipated a still more glorious triumph for the morrow.

About an hour after midnight, the spies returned, and proceeded to the commander's tent. How it might be, I cannot tell, but in spite of strictest cau-

tion, the intelligence thus brought was soon known throughout the camp, and a great change came over the spirits of the soldiers.

Instead of mirth and laughter there was almost total silence; instead of boasting speeches there were grave mysterious whispers. A chill seemed to have fallen even upon the bravest; a horrible nameless dread hung over the army like a brooding dæmon.

“What means this ominous silence?” I said to Julian. “Who can say?” he replied. “I know not the reason, but I myself am strangely affected with vague feelings of awe.” “That,” said I, “is easily accounted for. We are influenced by the feelings of a surrounding multitude, even though the cause of their sensation be unknown—nay, even when it is known and reason forbids our sympathy.” “It may be so,” said Julian; “let us go amongst the men, and try to raise their spirits.”

We walked about, and listened to the low-breathed words of the soldiers, whispering to one another. “They have horns growing from their foreheads,” said one man. “That is nothing,” said another; “they leap upon your shoulders, and tear your eyes out with their claws.” “And it is no

use to strike," said a third, in low mysterious, accents. "Murdoc, the Briton, told Gallus how he had heard that when you wound them, their flesh instantly joins together again. Even if you lop off a head it immediately leaps back into its place."

"Ho! good friends," cried I, interrupting, "what wonderful tales are these you are telling? By Hercules! I should like to see some of those conjurers whose heads play such tricks!"

The soldiers started up from the ground; they all looked confused and ashamed, but not one of them could find me an answer. At last, an old veteran stammered out—"Noble Herminius—the Graumi." "The Graumi!" I answered contemptuously, "who are they? You seem to be mightily afraid of them."

"Noble Herminius," said the veteran, again speaking, but this time boldly, "Thou knowest it is not much our habit to fear. Were all the Barbarians in this island coming against us (as they say, they are), by Jupiter! we should not care. But these Graumi are enchanters—evil dæmons—mortal man can do nothing against them."

“ Oh !” I answered laughing, “ it is surprising what good swords can do against dæmons ! Dæmons forsooth ! I’ll warrant these magicians are a set of very harmless people. And those cowardly Barbarians tell lies to frighten you, about mysterious terrible monsters. Don’t be made fools of ! I know all about these Graumi ; and so will you very soon.” Then laughing carelessly I went on to the next group of marvellers.

Julian and the other officers followed the same plan, and confidence was apparently restored ; but I was conscious of a creeping horror at my own heart, and knew that if I felt thus troubled, the unlearned soldiers must feel so likewise in yet greater degree, however they might succeed in disguising their sentiments.





CHAPTER XXIII.

GE

HE dawn came at last, and we beheld the Barbarian host. The hills opposite were covered with masses of men, whom, in the growing light of morning, we could perceive hurrying over the slopes, and ranging themselves in order of battle at the command of their priestly leaders, whose white garments fluttering in the wind were visible at a great distance.

“A goodly host!” said Julian. “I have never seen the Britons in such force. Do you think the commander will march out, or wait till Milvius comes up with his men?”

“It would be wiser to wait,” I replied; “but I think he will lead us out at once. To stay behind these ramparts, he will argue, would dishearten our men, and encourage the Barbarians, who are always stronger in attack than resistance. We shall march!” “Well,” said Julian, “I hope we

may ; but I think not." "I think we shall ; but hope not," was my answer.

At that moment the roar of the trumpets made every heart leap with joy, and sent the blood flushing through our veins.

Oh glorious Battle, thou art the sole reality which far exceeds imagination's hope !

We marched forth from the northern gate. The remains of two legions, the Fourth and the Thirteenth, numbering in all six thousand men, formed our heavily armed force ; of light troops, there were four hundred Balearian slingers and archers, also about a thousand auxiliary Britons of a southern tribe. Of cavalry, we had none.

For the defence of the camp, were left part of the Thirteenth legion, and five hundred Britons ; the rest of the army was drawn up in a solid mass, composed of three equal divisions, ranged in close order.

The fourth legion led the van, the cohorts to which Julian and I belonged being at the left of this first division. The Balearians were placed on our right, and half of the auxiliaries on the left, to protect our flanks.

In this order we moved forward at a rapid pace, bearing down on the centre of the Barbarian force.

As we drew nearer it became evident that the quickness of our movements had taken the enemy by surprise. Their army, composed of various tribes, differing from one another in arms, in discipline, and even in language, could only have been made to act in concert by the most careful and tedious arrangement on the very battle-field; and their leaders, aware of this, had hoped to overawe us by their superior force, and shut us up in our encampment till it suited them to make the assault. As it was, their whole host was in confusion, large bodies of men hurrying in every direction—every tribe striving to seize the foremost post, and exchanging cries of defiance with some rival race.

The war-chariots, instead of being in readiness to charge our advancing masses, were huddled together on the further bank of a deep rocky brook, which was certain to hold them in check for more than an hour, as the chariots had to be carried across by men.

This ravine, however, greatly strengthened the

enemy's position, and we should not have crossed without difficulty had they waited our attack; this, fortunately, they were not sufficiently disciplined to do, and before we got within bowshot, a vast horde of them passed the stream and rushed towards us in a confused mass.

On they came like a furious wave—but we were rocks, and all their efforts failed to shake our firmness.

Our spears drank their blood; our keen swords clove through flesh and bone. Onward we went, keeping our close array, shoulder to shoulder, foot answering foot, hand answering hand—scarcely a man of us had fallen, while the ground was strewn with writhing Barbarians.

In a few minutes the van of that mighty host was completely broken and put to rout. The brook was soon filled with struggling men, whose panic flight carried confusion into the rest of the advancing troops, who vainly strove to bear up against their own terrified countrymen, pressed upon in the rear by all the weight of our legions.

We crossed the brook over the bodies of the slain; we drove our enemies to the right and left.

They fled on every side, casting away their brazen weapons. Not a chariot had been able to act against us, for we made the Barbarians themselves serve as our shield, and now the fleeing masses overturned cars and horses, and trampled them under foot.

Still we advanced—we gained the centre of the enemy's position on the hill.

At that moment we heard cries arising on the right; the men who had been fleeing before us were forced back upon our swords, and we were furiously encountered by a host of Barbarians very different in arms and appearance from those we had been accustomed to see. These fierce warriors were not clad in rude armour like some of the Britons; but, nearly naked, were painted in various extraordinary colours. Instead of bearing short brazen swords and javelins, they wielded iron blades of enormous length and weight.

“The Caledonians!” shouted some of our veterans, who knew the foe. Then rang sword against sword as the north-men fell upon us. Desperate was the conflict. What discipline can do, it did for us. Though our companions fell in numbers, smitten by those terrible swords that clove

through helmets and breastplates as if they were *lien* garments—shearing off heads, arms, and legs at every stroke; dividing men asunder from head to waist, till the ground became a pool of blood and trampled flesh—firmly we stood, and yielded not an inch. As our comrades dropped, we pressed closer to one another, and returned the Caledonian blows with steady thrusts of our short swords—and though the wounds we made were less ghastly to behold, they were more numerous and deadly than those that the enemy inflicted.

Julian and I were fighting side by side. Neither of us had received a serious hurt, though many Barbarians had fallen before us. Irenæus was near, fighting valiantly, but choking for want of breath, and bleeding from several gaping wounds.

Our division had suffered more than the others, having led the van the whole morning, and as I cast my eyes around, it seemed to me that more than half our number had fallen. We still pressed on, however, as steadily as before, and at length the brave Caledonians were forced to give way. With shouts of triumph, we pursued and slaughtered the fleeing foe until the trumpets sounded a halt.

Before our broken ranks were well closed up, we beheld another host advancing against us. Irenæus ground his teeth, and muttered, "Caradoc!" as we recognised the ensigns of the well-known tribe.

Caradoc, all dressed in white, headed his people. They came on bravely, but their attack seemed trifling after the furious onset of the Caledonians, and we quickly drove them back; they retreated, however, in good order, fighting for every foot of ground. Bright gleamed the priestly garments as the Druid flew from place to place encouraging his men: Irenæus earnestly strove to get within reach of his ancient foe—more than once they had nearly met, but the tide of battle separated them.

The Britons began to hasten their retreat; their furious leader, with cries that resounded over the din of conflict, adjured them to hold their ground. They rallied a little, he pressed to the front, and at last found himself opposite Irenæus.

With a yell of hatred Caradoc rushed at his enemy. The wary old centurion warded off the first sweeping blow, and wounded his antagonist in

the right arm. He half dropped his sword; then recovering it with a sudden snatch, and stopping a thrust made by Irenæus, he struck him full on his helmet, and brought him to the earth. I leaped forward, and drove my sword through Caradoc's breast. He fell beside Irenæus, and immediately turned on him, and seized him by the throat in a convulsive death-grip:—and thus embracing, we left the two enemies, for the pressure of the fight drove us forward.

The Barbarians continued to retreat. For a while they kept some order, and maintained their vantage-ground above us; but, daunted by the loss of their leader, they began to lose heart; we pressed them fiercely; they wavered, they broke, turned their backs, and ran tumultuously down the hill.

Too hotly our men urged the pursuit in spite of all the efforts of their centurions.

The foremost had reached the base of a wooded hill: we were on a level piece of ground, the deep stream flowed on our left, and in front of us were rough broken crags overspread with ivy and coarse brush-wood. Some aged decaying pines grew among the rocks, and cast a gloomy shade, which deep-

ened gradually towards the summit, for there the trees found richer soil, and their limbs were more thickly covered with vigorous, dark green foliage.

The fleeing Britons began to scale the crags with wonderful activity, drawing themselves up by the ivy or clinging to the trunks of trees; but our men paused, hesitating to follow them into such difficult ground.

Suddenly arose strange and terrible sounds in the forest above; at first, smothered, hoarse, and broken, like dying groans, then swelling into a wild, mournful cry.

We looked upwards, and beheld a gigantic figure moving among the rocks, and throwing up its arms with frantic gesticulations. Presently it disappeared, and there was a moment of complete silence.

Again the cry arose—then there burst forth a deep tremendous roaring, as if from ten thousand furious lions, and a host of savage beings rose from their lairs, and rushed down the craggy steep.

They were monsters rather than men. Their lean, huge bodies were overgrown with masses of tawny hair, through their beards gnashed sharp,

glittering tusks, their eyes shot forth yellow gleams, in their hands they brandished ragged branches or young trees uprooted.

With immense leaps they sprang from rock to rock, bounding like wild beasts ravening for their prey; the earth shook beneath the weight of their limbs; great pieces of rock broke off and came thundering down the precipice.

The Britons screamed in terror at the sight of these their own allies. They fled hither and thither—some madly ran to us for help.

In a moment the giants fell upon us like the thunderbolts of heaven. We were dashed down—trampled upon—crushed—swept from the earth. What were our swords against such foes! The Graumi laughed at swords. With bare chests they pressed against our weapons; caring not for wounds, they grappled us in their arms; they beat heads and bodies in pieces with their clubs; they sprang on us like wolves, and tore our throats with their teeth.

I saw a tawny giant rushing towards me, shaking aloft a club of oak; he leaped at me with a screaming laugh. But Julian met him before he reached me, and clove his head in twain; then fell

upon another Graum and slew him at a blow, then buried his sword in the heart of a third—never surely was man so strong and brave !

“ Forward ! Forward ! ” shouted Julian, springing up a small hillock that lay in front. We rallied at his voice, drove back the Graumi, and gained the rising ground. There we stood fast—a knot of desperate men—and taught our cruel foes to respect Roman valour. We were isolated from the rest of the army. What was happening to it we had no time to consider ; our minds were wholly occupied with the task of defence.

Julian dealing lightning blows with a long Caledonian sword, still bade defiance to the savages—they shrank from daring his terrible strokes. Our spirits rose in the midst of peril, we encouraged one another with cheering shouts.

For an instant the attack slackened. Looking round we perceived at no great distance the pinnacles of some detached rocks, which broke forth from the foot of the hill on our right.

“ Comrades ! ” said Julian, “ we must gain those rocks. Lock up closer. Now then—come on ! ”

Down the hillock we rushed like a tempest ; the

Graumi, taken by surprise, gave way ; all who stood in our path we slaughtered ; the rocks were nearly won, and we had not lost another man. But the Graumi were not to be baffled thus. Recovering from their astonishment, they fell upon us with renewed fury. Again swept through the air those terrible clubs ; at every stroke fell another and another soldier, miserably mangled ; still we made our way, Julian raging in front like a flaming fire—a beacon to us—a furnace to the foe.

We were close to the rocks. Two giant brethren towering in height above their fellows, rushed to defend the stronghold. Julian threw himself upon them. The foremost hurled an enormous stone ; it missed my friend, but dashed down two brave soldiers. As the giant stooped in the act of heaving the stone, Julian's sword struck fair upon the monster's shoulder. His head and left arm fell to one side, his body to the other, and the blood leaped up like a fountain.

But before Julian could recover his guard, the other brother yelling with despair, smote him a tremendous blow, and brought him to his knees. We rushed forward, but the Graum, whirling his

long club, dashed down the foremost men, and again and again struck Julian as he lay helpless on the earth.

I forced my way to the front, parried a club-stroke, and thrust at the breast of the giant; but my sword glanced on his ribs. In a moment he held me in his grip, and raised me up in the air. My armour bent under that fearful pressure: I was suffocating. My right arm was free. I continued to stab my enemy.

Suddenly he fell. I was beneath him, but his weight did not come full upon me. Glaring at me with his horrid eyes, he grasped my head, forced it back, and clutched at my throat with his teeth. With my last strength I thrust at his side. I felt my blade go deep into him—he leaped from the ground, gave a hideous roar, and fell down dead.

I tried to rise, but could only crawl. My comrades were around me, still fighting nobly. "Cheer up, Herminius!" cried Milo, spitting out blood and words together—"the rocks are ours." Then my good comrade lifted me up, and led me on, supporting me with his arm.

"Do not mind me, kind Milo," I feebly said,

“look to Julian who lies desperately hurt.” “We have got him safe,” answered Milo; “now, come!” “Ah! that for you!” cried he, slaying a savage who attacked us—“Forward, Romans! Down with the accursed hounds!”

A cheer burst from our little band. “Forward! Forward!” was the cry. One more charge, and the rocks were ours.





CHAPTER XXIV.

FOR the present we were safe. Standing in a sort of cavern, chiefly open above, but encompassed on three sides by inaccessible walls of rock, and only to be entered through a narrow passage, we hoped to be able to maintain ourselves till succour arrived; so we took the wounded to the farther end of the place, and set the fresher soldiers to guard the entrance. The Graumi made a few desultory attacks, but finding us too strongly posted, they at length drew off their main force, and only left a sufficient number of men to watch us, and prevent us from leaving our retreat; after which, hostilities ceased for the time.

Having now partly recovered from the weakness caused by the fearful pressure of the savage's arms, I went to the front of the cave to examine the country, and see what the enemy were doing. As my head still felt dizzy, I took off my helmet to

admit the air more freely, thus clearly exposing my face, and no sooner had this happened than a man stepped out from among the Graumi, and came forward, making friendly gestures. In spite of all remonstrances, I went to meet him. He came closer, and said—"I am Lorn." I then saw that it was indeed that strange youth, but not as formerly clad in skins of beasts, nor assuming a slave's uncertain sullen gait. His gigantic body was now displayed in savage nakedness; with haughty strides he stalked over the ground; on his brow was a frown; on his mouth still flickered a ferocious smile; his hands were red with Roman blood.

"I am Lorn—yet not Lorn," he said. "Lorn! a friend of Caradoc? a foe of Rome?" I cried in utter amazement. "What matters that?" he answered. "For the sake of the friendship there has been between us, I will save you and those with you in the cave. Fear not; but keep good watch. Farewell!" Waving his hand with an air of majestic protection, he turned away and rejoined his people.

I re-entered the cavern, and having encouraged our wearied men by assurances of safety, they began

to dispose themselves for the rest they so much required, while I passed through them to the place where the wounded had been laid.

There I found Milo kneeling at the side of Julian, who lay gasping in dreadful agony. His hair was all bedabbled with blood, but his calm pale face, unstained by wounds, looked more beautiful and noble than ever. Had it not been for the deep suffocating sighs that continually forced open his mouth, bearing with them the hot bubbling heart-blood, one might have thought that he lay in peaceful repose—weary but unhurt. At the sorrowful sight my heart sank within me, and tears blinded my eyes. The love I had once felt for Julian revived in all its strength; remembrances of the cruel injuries I had done that faithful friend rose before me and tortured my soul. I seated myself at the feet of the dying man, hoping against hope that he might see me, and utter some word of forgiveness and farewell.

At length Julian was seized with a more violent suffocating fit than ever, his shattered chest shook as if it would burst in pieces, his brow was contracted with agony, streams of blood poured from his lips.

I thought this was the death struggle ; but it passed, and again the calm look returned.

He spoke my name. I came closer to him, and took his hand in mine. Faintly his voice breathed the words—“ I am dying—” “ Oh dearest friend,” I said, weeping bitterly, “ forgive me for all I have done. I am a most miserable man.” Making a great effort, he gasped out—“ Herminius, I forgive. God will comfort.” Then he ceased, and lay perfectly still, in utter exhaustion.

Suddenly he raised himself up ; he opened his eyes and gazed earnestly towards the stars. Some blessed sight seemed to burst upon his vision, a heavenly radiance gleamed for a moment on his brow, a cry of rapture broke from his lips—he fell back, murmuring the name of Christ, and died smiling like an angel of Paradise.

Scarcely knowing what I did, I walked to the entrance of the cavern. I could not yet grasp the certainty that Julian was no more. All my faculties were benumbed.

But presently flashes of light began to illumine the sky, and our soldiers shouted with tremendous clamour. The startling surprise burst the chains

that bound me, and at once I felt all my wretchedness. I laid me down on the earth, and groaned and wept. Milo came to me. With kindly force he compelled me to rise, and persisted in making me listen to him. What rough words of comfort he may have uttered I scarcely heard; but he gained my attention by striking on a fresh chord of agony. "Come," said he, "act like a man. We need all our courage. Here is the camp in flames."

I heard these words—it was enough. Tall spires of flame were piercing the skies, columns of smoke ascending to the clouds; and the noise of battle was faintly audible as the light breezes set towards us. "We can do nothing," said Milo. I turned away in silent misery, and remained all night outside the cavern, watching the flames and thinking of Julian's death and Tanaquil's peril.

Early in the morning, while it was yet dusk, Lorn returned, and beckoned me to come out of hearing of the soldiers. "Fortune has favoured your countrymen again," he said, somewhat bitterly. "What do you mean?" I asked in return, hardly daring to take his words in their literal sense. "I mean, that your army has retaken the camp after it

had been half-burnt by the Britons, who held it for the best part of an hour." "Then you are completely defeated?" Lorn laughed. "No. *We* are not—the Britons are. Had they been men like us it would have been different. Fools! I wish we had never mixed ourselves up with their quarrels!"

"Lorn," I asked in extreme anxiety, "can you tell me anything of Tanaquil?" He became visibly uneasy. "I know nothing of her," at length he said. "I was not near the camp. Had I but been there!" "Is she dead? Is she taken captive?" I continued to ask, thinking that he kept back from me some dreadful intelligence. "I told you before that I did not know," replied Lorn; "so keep up a good heart. Perhaps you may find her safe. I came to tell you to return to the camp. Your path is clear. You will see me again before long. Farewell! Stay," he added, looking back, "how fared it with Iran and Julian in the fight? Do you know?" "Alas!" said I, "Julian lies here dead. Irenæus and Caradoc the priest fought together, and both of them are also slain." Lorn trembled, and laid his hand heavily on my shoulder; but said not

a word. Then he left me, and walked slowly away down the hill.

Hope again arose after this conversation. I said to myself that there had been no time for the Barbarians to carry off prisoners from the camp, and that it was not their custom to put women to death during warfare ; that consequently Tanaquil's chief danger must have arisen from the fire ; a mere partial conflagration, from which she could not have failed to escape. In short, from the extreme of despair, I allowed rash imagination to raise me to a state of confidence—even cheerfulness ; for at the moment my thoughts forgot to dwell upon Julian's death.

I returned to the cavern, cheering the soldiers by the news that the victory was ours ; then Milo, by my direction, set them immediately in order, and we marched towards the camp, bearing with us the body of Julian. Avoiding the vicinity of the wood, we kept along the hillside, passing over the field of battle, which was covered with the dead and dying. The Graumi appeared to have suffered a heavy loss. Numbers of them lay on the ground in hideous attitudes of death, or writhing in contortions of ferocious

agony. As we passed by, the wounded gnashed their teeth, and tried to strike us or seize us with their claws. One soldier indeed, accidentally trod on a Graum who lay gasping behind a bush, and the savage so tore him that he expired in a few minutes. In revenge we left the wretch to die a lingering death, instead of mercifully putting an end to his sufferings.

We next came to the place where Caradoc had made his attack, and there we halted to search for the bodies of Irenæus and his enemy. The latter we soon found. He was quite dead, my sword-thrust having been sufficient. The old centurion was not where he had fallen, but Milo discovered him lying on his back with his head propped up against a stone. "He still lives!" cried Milo. I ran to Irenæus, and raised him from the ground; he half opened his eyes, but could not speak. Four of the men then lifted him in their arms, and thus we bore him with us.

On our arrival at the camp,—as soon as military discipline permitted, I hastened to the place where Irenæus and his daughter used to live; dashing through the embers of the nearly extinguished con-

flagration without stopping either to ask or answer questions. Heaven be thanked ! there stood the tent as of old ! Neither flames nor Barbarians had wrought it the slightest injury.

The door was closed—I dreaded to open it. I opened it a very little and called Tanaquil's name.

There was no answer. Again I called more loudly. Still no answer. She sleeps, I said to myself ; I must not wake her.

I waited a little while and listened. Joy unspeakable ! I heard a slight movement. Again I heard it. Again—more distinctly. My heart beat violently, my limbs could scarcely support me.

I entered the tent, I spoke ; my arms were outstretched to embrace Tanaquil. Alas ! she was not there.

Despairingly I looked around. At the further end of the tent was a couch partly hidden by a screen of skins. Fool that I was ! Without doubt Tanaquil lay there asleep.

Again ! I was sure I heard her move. I drew back the screen with eager expectation. Alas ! alas ! no lovely maiden was lying on the couch ; but a loathsome, predatory rat, disturbed at my coming,

leaped from the very pillow, and darted to the door, uttering its hateful cry.

I forced myself to firmness. I left the deserted tent, and went hither and thither, stopping all I met who had been in the camp during the night, and asking them if they could tell me of Tanaquil. Not one of them had seen her. I dared no longer hope. The Barbarians must have carried her off. Alas ! how to find in what direction ?—how, even, by what tribe she had been taken ?

Lorn only could help me ; but him I might not see again for many days—perhaps, never : delay was unendurable, I resolved to set out alone in search of my beloved maiden.

I sent to ask the commander's permission for the journey, and meanwhile returned to my tent.

When I got there I was surprised to see Lorn, who was again clad in his former dress. "Herminius," said he, "Tanaquil is in the hands of Caradoc's tribe. They are on their way to the Royal City." "We must follow them," I said ; "I was on the point of setting out." "You must not go, however," replied Lorn, checking my impatience by the calm earnestness of his manner. "You are in-

experienced in our forest ways; and active and brave as you are, you could not keep pace with me. Much time would be lost; and, let me tell you, every moment is of consequence. We are losing time now, but I must convince you. If they once get Tanaquil within the city walls, it will be impossible to save her."

"To save her?" I cried. "Surely they will not do her any injury! She is related by blood to their chiefs." "The very reason," interrupted Lorn, "why they are almost certain to put her to death. But I waste time. She is at present well treated, I doubt not. So fear nothing. I will save her—you must remain here."

I began to remonstrate, but Lorn angrily cried—"Go, if you like—then I will not. Choose! Of course you will go; it will be so much better for Tanaquil; you love her so much." Enraged at his sneering tone, I answered, calmly enough—"I will go. I do not intend to submit to your dictation. My love, which you mock at, will bear me faster and farther than ever your insolent pride carried you." He glared fiercely at me, and said—"I have spoken. I cannot go back from my words. The

death of Tanaquil be on you—not me! Let her die. Why should I save her for this ungrateful Roman?"

Muttering these words he left me.





CHAPTER XXV.

T nightfall I armed myself, and set out on my perilous journey. Though not entirely free from misgivings, I felt on the whole cheerful and confident of success. Presumptuous as I might be thought in expecting to take Tanaquil by my own unaided efforts from a band of fierce barbarians, the idea was not so unreasonable as it seemed, for the Britons believing themselves unpursued, were certain to loiter on their march and keep careless watch ; besides, as they probably treated their highly-born captive with respect, her resting-place each night would be at some distance from their own. I hoped therefore to find an opportunity of carrying her off during the darkness ; and this done, I trusted to fortune for the rest.

Being sufficiently well acquainted with the country to know the relative positions of places, I did

not hesitate which road to follow: neither going towards the Lonely Lake, nor by the path over the rocks, I plunged at once into the forest, taking the direct road to the Royal City.

Before long I came upon traces of the Britons. At first I had no means of knowing whether they were left by Tanaquil's captors or by some other band; towards morning, however, as the light increased, I observed near the human footmarks the tracks of a large dog, who I felt convinced could be no other than Bran; and belief became certainty when, on examining the impressions of the fore-feet, I found that a claw was wanting—a deficiency I had formerly noticed. Bran, it was evident, had been with Tanaquil when she was taken, and followed her faithfully; and the Britons, probably glad to secure so fine a dog, had not chosen to drive him away.

Blessing him in my heart, I went on, full of gladness. Excited by the pursuit, buoyed up by sanguine hopes, and encouraged by meeting with such unlooked-for guidance, I forgot all my troubles, and bounded along like some free-spirited hunter eager in the chase. But my presumption was soon

punished. Before it was yet evening I strayed from the right path, and completely lost my way.

The night was passed in grief and anxiety ; at daybreak I renewed my wanderings, but in vain. Two days were wasted in these hapless efforts ; on the third I met Lorn. I welcomed him as a true friend, and for his part, he could not conceal his joy at seeing me again.

We made no mention of our quarrel. “Strange chance,” was all he said, “by which we meet in this forest !” These words were meant to keep me from supposing that he had purposely followed me, contrary to his angry vow ;—willing to spare his pride, I did not say all I thought.

He soon led me to the right track, and we continued our pursuit of the Britons. In the evening we came to a ravine whose rocky sides bore traces of the force of winter torrents, though now its bed was nearly dry. “Call me a Roman for the future, if they have not passed a night there !” cried Lorn, with his usual boasting sneer ; for which, however, I forgave him, when, descending into the ravine, he pointed out the marks of Tanaquil’s small feet, impressed on the soft ground in the hollow.

“They took her to the cave no doubt,” said he to himself; then crossing where Tanaquil had passed, we clambered over some rocks, and came to a narrow cavern, in which we found a roughly-made bed of leaves and grass.

With intense emotion I beheld the couch so lately pressed by my beloved maiden—I could not restrain my tears. Lorn also seemed in much trouble. With the greatest care he searched all round the cave, examining particularly the ground near its entrance.

“Come!” he suddenly said, grasping my arm. I followed him; he went a short distance up the ravine; then climbing a steep bank, he leaped into a cavern much larger than the one we had left. “See! see!” he cried, pointing vehemently to numerous traces of the Britons. “O fool! miserable fool that I am!”—and he clenched his hands and gnashed his teeth.

“What grieves you?” I asked. “Can you not see even that?” he bitterly replied. “But I forget—you cannot know. Listen! There is a second entrance to the cave in which Tanaquil lay. By that we could have saved her while the Britons

slept in the other place. But it is too late! Would that I had been but a day sooner!"

We looked at each other. We both felt that in our insensate quarrelling Tanaquil had been sacrificed. I recalled his words—"Her death will be upon thee"—and my blood froze at the thought that his saying was about to be fulfilled. Lorn perhaps felt equal remorse, though his conduct had been less blameable than mine. We reproached not one another, but leaving the cavern with heavy hearts, we urged the pursuit more zealously than ever.

That day we came up with the Britons, and all night we watched them. Often were we near Tanaquil, but the vigilance of her guards was not to be deceived. We began to despair, for the Royal City was close at hand.

The next night they halted by the Reedy Lake. We knew it was our last chance. We crawled through the midst of the sleeping warriors; Tanaquil saw us and started with glad surprise, but Bran, who had not found us out, for the wind blew strongly toward us, suddenly observed our crouching figures, and growled loudly, thinking we

were enemies coming to do his mistress hurt. The Britons took the alarm ; they rushed upon us from every side ; we escaped with the utmost difficulty.

In the morning we crept forward through the bushes, and beheld the Barbarians embarking to cross the lake. Tanaquil was surrounded by soldiers, and as they placed her in a boat, I saw that they had bound her hands so tightly that her tender wrists were all swollen and bleeding. Oh what rage burned within me ! Scarcely could I refrain from rushing sword in hand upon the accursed savages.

Lorn ground his teeth. "Stay," he whispered, "we can do nothing now. Wait." "Wait!" my heart of hearts thanked him for that word. Oh, what fond promises of vengeance—pitiless, inexpiable—were bound up in it ! Never had I felt so much in sympathy with Lorn before. How we would revel together in the blood of the reptiles, slaking, not quenching, the thirst of our undying hate !

Silent and still we sat, drawing fierce consolation from each other's eyes.

Lorn was the first to speak. "One way there is," he said, "of saving Tanaquil. Herminius," he

continued, "you have been more a friend to me than most men. I go to meet death for the sake of her you love. We shall not meet again. Return to the camp—joy will await you there."

I tried to speak. "Hush!" he whispered, with a sweet, mournful smile. "Grieve not for me. Why should I not die? I also love Tanaquil. I long for death."

Then he embraced me, and we parted.





CHAPTER XXVI.

DI did not attempt to oppose Lorn's purpose, knowing the firmness of his character, and not wishing to risk another quarrel ; but as I could not bear to return to the camp in ignorance of his fate, I determined to remain for three days near the lake, hoping to hear tidings of him, or perhaps find some means of doing him service.

On the second day, while hiding among the reeds, I observed a party of Britons waiting for the ferry-boat, which happened to be at the opposite side : I crept cautiously towards them, and brought myself within easy hearing of their conversation. They were travellers, it appeared, country people who had come up to attend a great festival soon to be celebrated in the city : most of the party were men, ferocious, brutal-looking barbarians, but two women of considerable beauty accompanied them.

Their conversation was about the festival. "Oh Murdoc," cried one of the women, "I hope there may be some Romans!" "You are a fool," growled Murdoc; "the Romans shew no sport, they die without a sign. Give me a victim from the south country—they are tender there! Were you at the sacrifices last year? How that white-skinned girl flinched when the Druids cut her with their knives!"

"Why did they do that?" said one of the other men; "they always used to burn them alive." "How could the High-priest prophesy without seeing what way the blood ran?" answered Murdoc. "Well," said the woman who had first spoken, "they prophesied wrong. I do not like them to kill women—it frightens me. Now, to see a man die bravely—that is glorious! It makes my heart glow all over." "You are wrong, Cerda," said the other woman, interrupting vehemently; "oh! I do hope there may be a woman!"

"There will be, pretty friend!" cried one of the armed ferrymen, speaking from the boat which had just arrived, "a handsome maiden, and nobly born too."

The Barbarians danced with delight. Cerdá alone looked distressed. "Handsome—and nobly born," she said at length, repeating the soldier's words; why does no one save her?" The Briton laughed long and loud. "Oh that is the best joke of all!" cried he; "oh, a glorious joke! Just listen. Yesterday I had brought the boat to shore—as it might be here—when who should I see coming up but a villainous fellow called Lorn, a slave who not long ago let two Romans out of prison, and killed a number of the guards. Oh ho! I said to myself, I'll soon make you pay for your misdeeds, friend Lorn; and I stooped down for an arrow. Unluckily he saw what I was doing, and leaped on me before I could shoot. Well—to make a long story short—says he, 'I come with important tidings to the Chief Druid; and you must take me to him.' Well, I took him to the Druids, and when he got there he cried out—'Druids! I—Lorn, a prince among the Graumi, come to offer myself as a sacrifice in the stead of the Lady Tanaquil!'"

"Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed Cerdá, clapping her hands. "Then the poor maiden is saved?"

“Not at all,” said the soldier, with a hideous grin.
“They put Lorn into prison as a murderer and impostor, and Tanaquil is to die all the same.”

“That is base!” said Cerdá indignantly.
“Never before has such treachery been done!”
“Well, perhaps it was treacherous,” replied the soldier, influenced not a little by Cerdá’s beauty; “but you see the man was a slave.” “He said he was a prince.” “Who would believe that?—there was no one to prove it. Besides, if he is a prince among the Graumi, what of it? You might as well talk of a prince among the wolves!”

“But it was base to put him in prison. They should have let him go, even if they refused his offer.” The ferryman remained silent for a moment, then muttered, “It is not for me to say so; but I think the Lady Guenora made them do it.”

As I lay listening to this dreadful conversation, every word that was spoken—the most trifling exclamation alike with those fatal accents which extinguished hope—pierced into my heart, and left its impression fixed for ever. In a sort of trance, I involuntarily continued to repeat that last sentence—“The Lady Guenora made them do it.” I could

not move hand or foot. I was half dead. My brain seemed filled with living fire, slowly circling round and round. Yet my eyes could behold everything distinctly. I saw Murdoc and his companions enter the ferry-boat, I saw the soldiers grasp their oars. Their commander gave the signal, and the barge shot forth from land.

As with a lightning flash, my senses returned. Instantaneously one single idea took possession of me—to save Tanaquil.

I sprang from the ground; I ran to the lake. Shouting loudly, I commanded the Barbarians to return.

At my sudden appearance some of the soldiers dropped their oars and seized bows and arrows; but I made gestures of peace, and continually cried out, “Tidings for Arturus the Druid!” “Who art thou?” asked the chief soldier, stepping on shore. “I am a Roman,” I replied, “but a friend of Arturus, and I bear him important tidings.”

At that moment one of the men in the boat called out, “It is Herminius the priest.” The commander looked at me attentively. “You are Herminius?” at length he said. “I warn you not to

enter the city. Guenora has offered a reward for your head. I owe you good-will; and her evil. I will not take you to your death.” “I wish for death, kind soldier,” I answered; “I come to offer myself for Tanaquil.”

The Briton meditated a while, then said—“Heaven forbid that I should oppose your worthy resolve. But think; this Tanaquil is marked for doom, perhaps you may be condemned like Lorn without saving. Guenora is powerful.” “I am a Druid—they cannot deny my nobility.” “Guenora will have you privately slain.” “I am ready to run all risks; I only pray you to take me across the lake.” “I will do more. I will secure your safety till you are actually in the hands of the Druids. But first ungird your sword, and take off that Roman armour.”

I did as the Briton directed, but I threw the honoured arms into the lake, that no man might shew them for a trophy.

Then Cerda came and put on me a white robe from her own shoulders, and wreathed round my head a crown of oak leaves. “Come, brave Roman,” she chanted in a measured cadence, “come

to the sacrifice. Come with thy gleaming dress—come with thy oaken crown. What a glory beams from thy face! Thou art greater than a king!”—and in her enthusiasm the beautiful maiden took me by the hands and kissed my forehead again and again.

They placed me in the boat, and Cerdá came and sat at my feet. During the whole time we were crossing the lake, this maiden ceased not to press my hand in hers, and kiss it, and weep over it. Very soothing was her tender compassion, though I felt as one who belonged not to this earth, my soul seemed so glorious within me: I felt like a god, yet this sweet kindness stole over me like pleasant incense from afar.

We landed near the city. Cerdá gave me one last embrace, and then departed with her friends. The soldiers set themselves in order, placed me in their midst, and began their march. The city gates were wide open, for it was festival time, and we passed unnoticed, but as soon as we entered the streets, crowds of people surrounded us, and I heard my name spoken in varying tones of wonder, contempt, and hatred; but no one dared to offer any violence.

We reached the sacred grove; the Druid guards

were summoned, and I was delivered into their hands as one dedicated to the gods. Then with deeply respectful gestures, the soldier ferrymen took leave of me and departed. Then the guards led me to a cavern cell, and left me there alone.

Presently the door was opened, and Arturus entered. His countenance was troubled. In his heart, love and hatred, sorrow and anger, were striving for the mastery, as remembrances of former affection alternated with recollections of wounded pride and injured honour ; and his features betrayed the struggle within. Anger prevailed. In a low stern voice he said—"How hast thou requited all my kindness ! Justly hath Heaven driven thee to this doom. The rays of to-morrow's sun will join with the fires which devour thy body."

"To-morrow, Druid ! to-morrow ! " I cried, scarcely knowing what I said, for I was in a sort of frenzy ; "to-morrow, behold me ! I will leap into the flames—I will embrace them—I will bathe my heart in them—I will wreath them round my head. For Tanaquil I do it—for her who is more lovely than the evening star—purer than the snow—more tender than the dove."

Then I knelt down, and, with intense longing, sighed—"Oh Tanaquil ! Tanaquil ! come to me !" At that moment I saw her. She glided slowly across the cell, between me and the Druid. Her face was sad but unspeakably lovely—a wreath of lilies was on her head. She passed by without heeding me, without a word, without a sign. When she had nearly reached the door she turned and looked upon me. Then tears streamed from her eyes, and she wrung her hands in terrible grief ; her lips parted, and though she spoke not, the word—"Farewell"—seemed to be breathed into my ear by a spirit's voice. "Tanaquil ! Tanaquil !" I cried, and threw myself towards her. She raised her hands to heaven as if calling down a blessing ; a faint mist diffused itself through the air, in a moment she vanished from my sight. I fell on my face and wept.

Presently I felt myself raised from the ground, and saw Arturus bending over me. All anger had left him ; he gazed on me with looks of the tenderest compassion. With the kindest voice he said, "Herminius, my poor friend ! calm yourself, I pray. What dæmon has got possession of you ? Be calm. All shall be well—I will preserve your life."

Whilst he was speaking I came to myself. All elation of mind was now gone, and I saw everything in its plain reality; yet the recollection of my past words and actions remained, and I blushed to think how much I had exposed myself to ridicule.

“Arturus,” I said, raising myself up firmly, “long fasting and other causes have produced an effect upon me. Forget what you have just seen and heard. I will speak plainly to you. We have nothing to do with feelings and emotions; I am here for one simple purpose—easily explained, easily understood. To-morrow, Tanaquil, the daughter of Irenæus, is to be sacrificed to the gods. I, Herminius, a noble Roman—also noble in your own order—present myself as a victim in her stead. You have no choice but to accept my offer. To-morrow, therefore, you will burn me alive; but you will set Tanaquil free, and conduct her in safety to the Roman camp.”

Arturus seemed astonished at the changes in my manner. He turned very pale. “What is it I hear?” at length he said. “You, Herminius! the wisest ruler of the mystery—you!—give yourself up to death for a contemptible child! Nay

—be calm ; Guenora herself is of small account reckoned against Herminius. Oh be wise ! You have injured me, yet I love you—I honour you. You shall not die. I cannot save Tanaquil ; but Guenora shall again be yours. Again shall you resume your high authority ; again shall you be my teacher, and I your humble disciple.”

“ No, Arturus,” I steadfastly replied, “ such things can never come to pass. Even if death seemed ten-fold more horrible than I deem it to be, I would not consent to abjure my country and my God. Once I have done so ; but I have known much sorrow since, and I bitterly repent of my sin. To live in wickedness is worse than death.”

Again Arturus looked at me with amazement. “ You speak a strange language,” said he, “ where did you learn it ? ” “ Not from the priests of Rome, nor from those of Britain. Listen Arturus, and let this convince you how vain is your wish to save me :—I am a Christian.” “ A Christian ! ” “ Yea—a Christian—well do you know Arturus, what that word implies.” “ Obstinacy, and intolerable pride,” exclaimed the Druid in sudden rage.

“But,” continued he, calming himself, “what can have induced you to adopt this senseless faith? Our teachers in Rome thought it scarcely worth ridicule.” “I studied it nevertheless,” said I. “Its doctrines made an impression on me. I meditated upon them continually. One day a wonderful vision was sent from Heaven to command me to become a Christian.”

“What was the nature of the vision? asked Arturus, with a singular expression of curiosity mingled with exultation, as of one who is on the point of making an important discovery. “A man named Paulus appeared to me and spoke words of power.” “A young man?—of beautiful countenance and radiant aspect?” “Nay. He was old, his black hair was thickly sprinkled with grey; his attire was poor and travel-worn.”

Arturus meditated. At last he said, “I offered you love and honour here, because I thought thus to move you from your resolve. But do not forget that if you prefer to return to your countrymen, it is still in your power to do so. Why should you die? Why should a light of the world be quenched? You may return in all honour. I will proclaim

that you strove to the end to consummate your self-sacrifice, but that the High Court refused to accept it. Your courage will be for ever held in admiration—for who can know what has passed between us?"

"Arturus—you belie love, you condemn conscience. Why should I thus ignobly save my life? Life without Tanaquil would be a curse."

"Life without you will be a curse to her."

The thought had not occurred to me—it was agony. "Oh, Arturus!" I cried in humble supplication, "save us both. You profess to love me—exercise all your power, and save us both!" The Druid turned away his head. "Herminius, I cannot. It might have been possible, had not—nay, why do I hesitate? Guenora loved you, and you have betrayed her. You—she might forgive; but Tanaquil, never. Nay, hearken! Were you even to fulfil your mad purpose, I much doubt if your fair-haired maiden would be suffered to return to her father—there are secret deaths as well as public."

The cold sweat started from my forehead. Arturus keenly watched me. "Farewell, Herminius," said he, rising to depart; "on the one

hand—life with love and honour ; on the other, death. Consider. Picture it to yourself. Stretch out your limbs ; regard them attentively. How shall you feel when those strong sinews shrivel and crack under the flames ! Imagine the slow fire scorching your tender skin ; consuming your bowels ; gnawing at your heart ! Think how the brain will ache, and throb, and melt, before the final moment comes ! ”

“ My words touch you not ? Yet consider. You die—but your spirit, you say, doth not. Where shall that spirit find a resting-place, oh wicked one ? Traitor, perjurer, deceiver of women, blasphemer alike of the god you publicly serve, and of him in whom you secretly believe—where shall you look for refuge ? Eternity is before you—forsooth ! O happy spirit ! ”

“ Wretch ! ” I cried, “ now you shew yourself in your true aspect. Begone ! Trouble me no more ! My God has mercy for the repentant sinner. Were a messenger to come from Heaven and deny that there was forgiveness for me—scarcely would I believe him. And shall I listen to thee, priest of the evil one ? Begone ! ”

Arturus again grew pale, and trembled. Then fixedly regarding me for an instant, he smiled a singular, dubious smile, and departed.





CHAPTER XXVII.

NIIGHT began to come on. Strange thoughts filled my mind. Little as I had seemed to Arturus to be affected by his words, they yet had succeeded in partly shaking my resolution. It was not so much the image of bodily suffering that appalled me: it was the openly expressed doubt of my spirit's well-being in a future state of existence.

What if the Druid were right? Could there be hope for so guilty a soul as mine? Eternal condemnation!—for ever and ever to pine in unspeakable torments; accursed of God—would this be my fate?

I shuddered to think that it might be. Might be? reflection whispered, “it *will* be—if you die to-morrow.”

To subject my soul to everlasting woe for another!—and that other a young, pure maiden, so fit

to die! Death, to her, would be the noblest boon. How the angels would welcome her—with what tender care would they bear her soul to Paradise! And ought I, for any thought of human joys and sorrows, to doom my soul—my own immortal soul—doom it, merely to call back another's spirit from Heaven's opening glories? Oh, it would be madness—impious madness!

Thus I reasoned for a while. Presently another thought began to form itself. It was so hideous, I wrestled with it, I strove against it, I poured forth wild words of prayer, but still the thought would not be driven off.

Then I yielded myself, and it said—“How knowest thou that Tanaquil will be saved? What is it that thou hast learnt? Doth youth save? Doth beauty? purity? love? Do such things save without faith in Christ? Hath not Tanaquil rejected that faith—not once, but many times—even with words of scorn? What can save Tanaquil?”

I sank on my knees and tried to pray, but my reeling brain could not devise words: I threw myself on the ground and beat my head against the stones.

I fancied I heard the prison-door open ; but my senses had deceived me—surely I was alone with the darkness as before. Yet an indescribable feeling told me that something was near. I shut my eyes, but strange glittering things seemed to revolve between my eyelids and the orbs they covered. Vast chambers of quivering gold, and green, and rainbow light, stretched far away to the centre of the earth. Whirling globes of fire for ever danced in the boundless halls, and serpents darted upon me with wide gaping mouths.

Sickened by this confusion, I opened my eyes. The darkness seemed less than before. As I continued to gaze, I saw that light was stealing into the cell from some hidden source. A smell like incense breathed itself into my nostrils ; at the same time a dense vapour arose and obscured the increasing light.

Presently this mist began to clear off, and I beheld a man standing in the middle of the room. He was of careworn aspect and clad in the dress of poverty ; his mantle partly covered his face, dark hair besprinkled with grey shaded his majestic forehead. It was Paulus the Christian, present in spirit where his body could not come.

Not now, as formerly, did his eyes beam on me with looks of love and compassion. Stern threatening glances shot forth from beneath his frowning brows. His presence inspired me with terror, instead of with peaceful joy, as when he had visited me in my tent. My hair bristled, my tongue clove to my mouth, with straining eyes I gazed on the apparition.

He opened his mouth and thus spake—"Sinful man! I am sent to warn thee for the last time. Repent! Dedicate thyself to holiness, and thy soul may yet be saved. Darest thou throw away the life that has been given thee to serve thy God? Darest thou hurl thyself into the flames of hell?"

He ceased. Vapours shrouded his form. Light began to fade into darkness.

Utterance returned to me. Trembling, I cried—"Oh, speak of Tanaquil!—will she be saved?"

From the cloud responded a voice—"Thine own heart will answer thee, if thou hast not been taught in vain. Let the dying, die—let the living, live: save thou thine own soul!" Then it seemed to me that Tanaquil would not be saved if she died on the morrow.

Die ! She must not die. That sweet young maiden die ! She shall not.

What am I ? Let me look at myself—let me consider myself fully. I am a man. I have a body, limbs, head ; bones, blood, muscles :—in all things I am like other men. Yet every day, some men die —why should I not ? If the base gladiator can endure his agonies, and welcome death with a smile ; shall not Herminius—the noble, the wise, the learned ?

Tanaquil ! thou shalt not die ! How could I see thy beautiful skin shrivel and blacken in the flames—thy tender eyes start from their sockets ? Reflection, thou art a curse ! Away from me ! No more will I think. To-morrow I die.

Oh God—thy eternity ! Woe, woe, for ever ! Days, months, years, thousands of years ; yet no hope—still, blackness of despair—still, the present, visible, palpable, curse of God.

This is too grievous to be borne. I will not die to-morrow.

Then Tanaquil must bear the eternal curse of God ? She must. Love—pity—honour—none of you my soul !—only save thyself from hell.

Memory has made me her slave. As if of the present, I have written down the thoughts of the past. Alas ! they are ever present thoughts to me !

In the morning—the pure, beautiful, heavenly, morning—came soldiers and bore me with them. How the crowd shouted as we passed ! and the bards sang—“ Noble Roman ! Brave Herminius ! Blessings for ever on him who goes to save Tanaquil ! The drooping lily shall live. The fading star shall shine again. Noble Roman ! How proudly he walks, rapt in high thoughts. How reverend are his hoary locks.—Hush ! It is not the snow of age—they are feathers from the grey wings of sorrow ! ”

They led me to the holy grove. There, beneath the oaks, were two lofty sacrificial piles. On the first stood Lorn. He smiled on me as I passed. It was a hero’s smile.

Tanaquil stood on the other pyre. Calmly she stood, as one who had bidden farewell to life. As, in the vision, she had shewn herself to me, so she now appeared :—around her was wrapt a snow-white mantle, on her head was a wreath of lilies.

She had no looks for things of this world—her eyes were fixed on space, as if contemplating the path her soul was going to tread.

They led me to the foot of the pile. I was conscious yet unconscious. I could not have resisted the force of a child; yet my restless mind supplied me with strength, and compelled my attention to every trivial object—to every slight movement. But to all that spoke of the terrors to come, my understanding was dead. I moved in a dream.

At Tanaquil's feet lay her faithful hound. Fiercely he growled when the soldiers approached. His eyes glared like coals of fire—but they fell when they met mine; and he cowered in ghastly fear.

The Arch-Druid came. “Hearken, ye people!” he cried, in a voice resounding far and clear.

Then he prayed to the god of war—“Oh, mighty Deity! on thy altar behold a victim: accept this sacrifice. Bestow on us thy favour. Vanquish our enemies.”

“Tanaquil! to the great god I devote thee. Virgins of the mysteries—kindle the sacred flames!”

Then answered another Druid, and said, “Stay

—oh stay—venerable Father ! Behold a man who claims to die for Tanaquil.” The people shouted for joy. To the priests the Arch-Druid turned—“ Druids—is it so?” They answered—“ It is so.” To me the Arch-Druid turned—“ Herminius—is it so?” “Answer!” whispered Arturus, bending over me. I turned away from him, but then I saw Tanaquil. I hid my face in my hands, and wept, and said, “Oh Arturus—have mercy on her. I cannot die.” Immediately Arturus cried out loudly—“ Herminius will not die for Tanaquil.”

Then a roar of fury burst from the people, and they sought to tear me in pieces, but the soldiers kept them back. In a few moments all was still—terribly still—still as the grave.

Hark ! what sound was that ? A sound of trumpets—I knew the note. Again they sounded—again ! Then arose the cry—“ The Roman trumpets ! To the gates, ye Britons ! Away ! Save the city. Away ! ”

Then there was hurry and confusion ; grasping of swords, and shouts of battle : and the Druids left the grove, and flew to lead their warriors to the fight.

Oh, that Tanaquil might be saved ! How still she stood, calmly gazing into space. I cried to her —she looked not. I would have run to unbind her from the stake, but guards were still around us.

Again the trumpets ! Again ! — nearer and nearer. The Romans are in the city—Tanaquil will be saved !

Fell Guenora ! what doest thou here ? Why comest thou with thy black hair streaming in the wind ? What is that torch thou bearest in thy right hand ? It is the sacred flame : and those are the Virgins of the Cavern.

Oh, thou can't not do it ! Oh, wretch ! Oh, dæmon of hell !

How the wood crackles ! How the red flames spring upward and clutch the fair white garments of the maiden ! She stirs not. Her soul is not here; it is gone to other regions. There ! —that hand— I have often pressed it in mine : it is a blackened cinder. The tender limbs shrivel quickly.

How the brave dog snarls at the flames ! Hound ! thou diest for thy love—I do not. Oh, but thou hast no soul—Bran !

Those red flames ! Still she stirred not. Still

her calm face seemed to commune with God in heaven.

She is dying. Her head droops—the eyelids close. It is death. Oh, God ! have mercy. She is dead.

Nay. She raises herself. She opens her eyes. They glance wildly. She fixes them on me. This is worse than any hell !

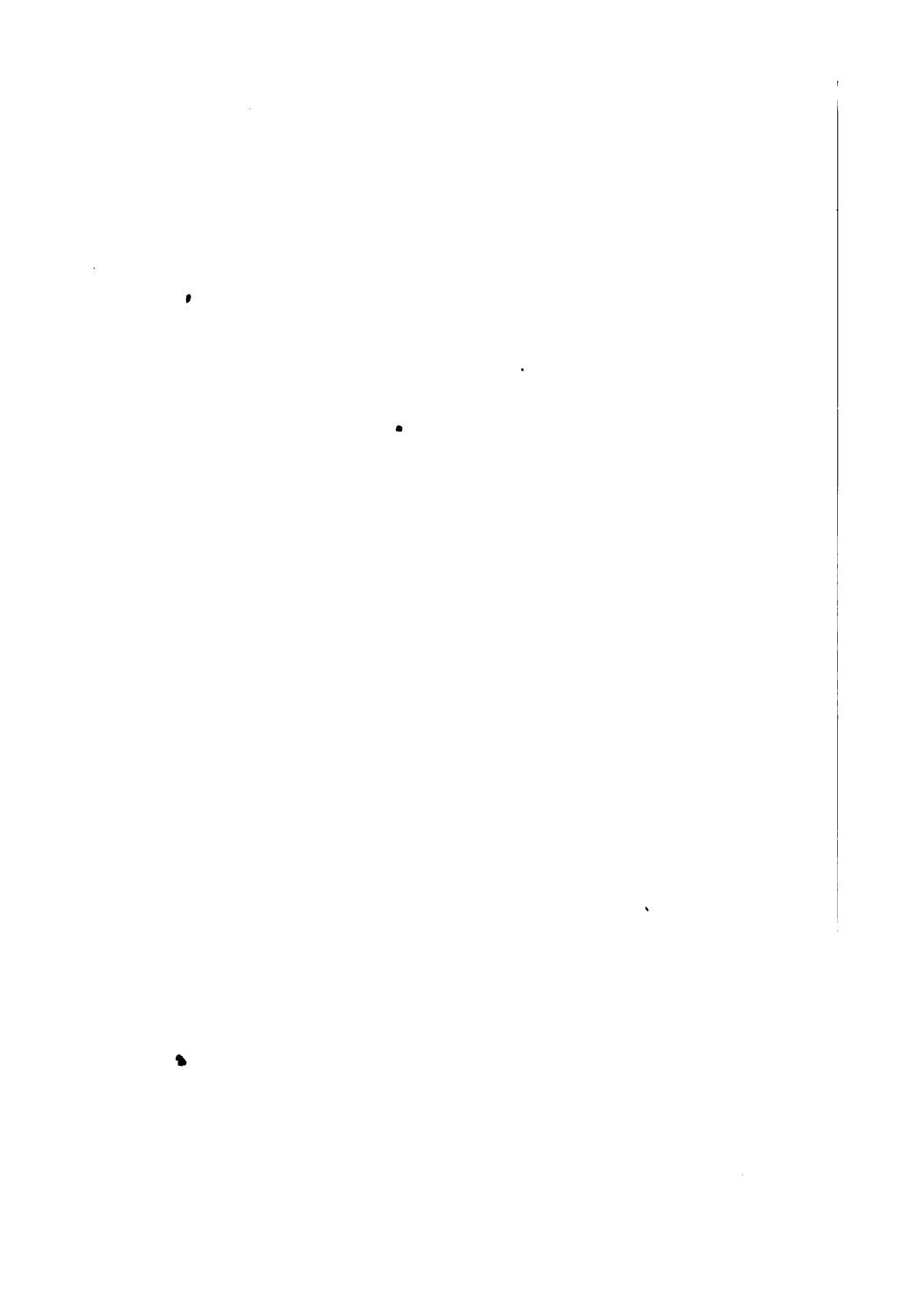
What a look she bends on me—how sad, how hopeless. She looks on me—yet not on me. How those violet eyes of my love look into mysteries of the other life ! Oh, what more than mortal sadness in that look !

She bowed her head and died. Oh God ! great God of mercy ! receive her spirit !

Vain prayer.



A D D E N D U M





ADDENDUM.



HE following manuscript, in a different hand from the preceding, was found attached to it.

“ It was I, Paulus Milo, once a Centurion in the Fourth Legion, who found this book in the house of Herminius, after he had been put to death at Aquileia for speaking injuriously of the gods.

“ Many of the things in the book I know to be true ; about some I am ignorant ; some are false.

“ That Herminius was learned in mysteries, no one may dispute, but as to the coming into my tent of Paulus the Christian, I deny it altogether, and much doubt if there was any such man at all.

“ As to the death of Tanaquil, Irenæus' daughter, it is marvellous that he should speak so certainly of it ; seeing she is said to be still alive, as well as her father. Lorn the Barbarian is also alive, for ought I know.

“ Gallus set both of them free from the sacrificial bonds ; but we were driven back for a time, and none of us saw them afterwards.

“ What that crafty priest, Arturus, may have made Herminius believe when he carried him off, and had his eyes put out that he might stay with him and prophesy—I cannot tell. It is easy to deceive a madman, and, by Hercules ! Herminius was half mad from the beginning, and quite mad at the end.

“ All I will say is—that neither madness nor hard words ever changed my friendship for him. He had a brave and noble heart, and would have been a ruler of men, had not the gods, jealous of his deep scrutiny into hidden mysteries, afflicted his mind, and at length altogether deprived him of reason.”

THE END.

